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THE ADVENTURERS

BY

GUSTAVE AIMARD

AUTHOR OF "PEARL OF THE ANDES,"
"THE TRAIL-HUNTER," Etc.

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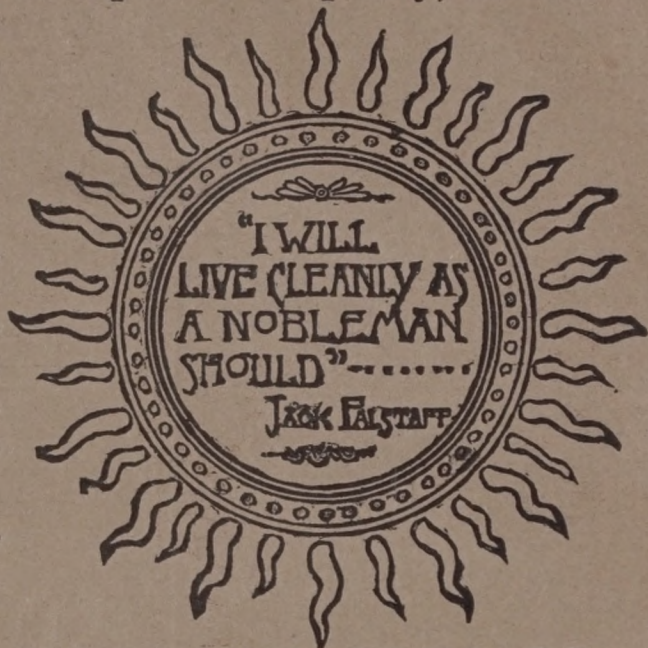


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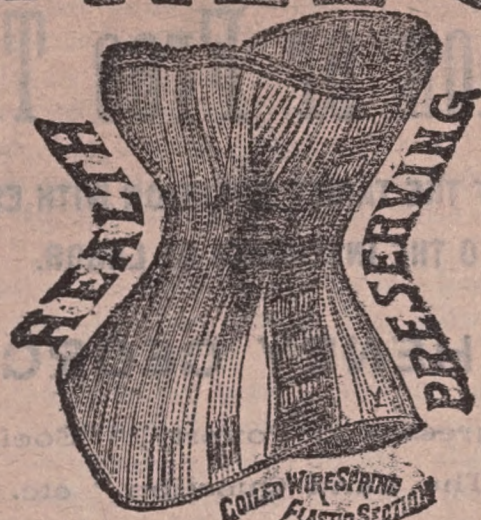
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CONTENTS.

- | | |
|--|--|
| I. Introductory. | XVI. The development of manu-
factures. |
| II. Clearing ground. | XVII. Protection and producers. |
| III. Of method. | XVIII. Effect of protection on Am-
erican industry. |
| IV. Protection as a universal need. | XIX. Protection and wages. |
| V. The protective unit. | XX. The abolition of protection. |
| VI. Trade. | XXI. Inadequacy of the free trade
argument. |
| VII. Production and producers. | XXII. The real weakness of free
trade. |
| VIII. Tariffs for revenue. | XXIII. The real strength of pro-
tection. |
| IX. Tariffs for protection. | XXIV. The paradox. |
| X. The encouragement of indus-
try. | XXV. The robber that takes all
that is left. |
| XI. The home market and home
trade. | XXVI. True free trade. |
| XII. Exports and imports. | XXVII. The lion in the path. |
| XIII. Confusions arising from the
use of money. | XXVIII. Free trade and socialism. |
| XIV. Do high wages necessitate pro-
tection? | XXIX. Practical politics. |
| XV. Of advantages and disadvan-
tages as reasons for pro-
tection. | XXX. Conclusion. |

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JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY,

14 and 16 Vesey Street,

NEW YORK.

THE
ADVENTURERS

A Story of a Love-Chase

BY

GUSTAVE AIMARD

AUTHOR OF "PEARL OF THE ANDES," "TRAIL-HUNTER," "PIRATES OF THE PRAIRIE,"
"TRAPPER'S DAUGHTER," "TIGER SLAYER," "GOLD-SEEKERS," "INDIAN CHIEF,"
"RED TRACK," ETC.

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REVISED AND EDITED BY PERCY B. ST. JOHN

NEW YORK
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14 AND 16 VESEY STREET

(1885)

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TROW'S
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PREFACE.

WITH the publication of the present and the succeeding volumes the most important series of Aimard's Tales of Indian Life and Adventure will be perfected. To preserve continuity, the volumes of this series should be read in the following order:—

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2. THE PEARL OF THE ANDER.
3. THE TRAIL-HUNTER.
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5. THE TRAPPER'S DAUGHTER.
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7. THE GOLD SEEKERS.
8. THE INDIAN CHIEF.
9. THE RED TRACK.

Gustave Aimard has a precedent in Fenimore Cooper for introducing the same hero in a long range of volumes, and, like his great predecessor, he has so arranged that each work should be complete in itself, and not necessitate the perusal or purchase of another. But Aimard has one marked advantage over Cooper; for, while "Leather-Stocking" is but a creation of the fancy, or, at the most, the type of the Backwoodsman, the Count Louis who figures as the hero of Aimard's series is a real man. Count de Kaousset Boulbon, had he

succeeded in his daring attempt of founding an independent kingdom in Mexico, would, in all probability, have become the Napoleon of the West. A gallant adventurer and thorough gentleman, he staked his life upon the issue, and ended his career the victim of unparalleled treachery, as our Author has faithfully recorded. Hence Aimard's romances have the great merit of being founded on an historic basis, and but little fiction was required to heighten the startling interest of each narrative.

Valentine Guillois, there is very little doubt, is intended for the Author himself, with all his qualities and defects. When Aimard first reached the New World he was the true, reckless Parisian ; but constant intercourse with nature rendered him a generous and thoughtful friend of humanity. So soon as he returned to civilisation, he began recording the history of his past life ; not so much for a livelihood, as for the pleasure he felt in living once again the life of excitement and adventure which he had known among the Indians. Aimard's books are written without an effort ; they flow spontaneously from his pen ; and the absence of artistic effect is the best guarantee of their truthfulness.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Gustave Aimard's books have attained an extensive popularity. They have been translated into nearly every modern language. The reception given to them in this country has been most flattering, and each day heightens their popularity. Hence it is not too much to assume that Aimard's Indian Tales have become recognised as standard works with young readers, for whom they are especially adapted ; because Gustave Aimard has never yet written a line which could prove offensive to the most delicate mind ; or which, dying, he would wish to erase.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE CHAPARRAL	7
II. THE FOSTER-BROTHERS	9
III. THE RESOLUTION	12
IV. THE EXECUTION	15
V. THE PASSAGE	17
VI. THE LINDA	18
VII. HUSBAND AND WIFE	21
VIII. THE DARK HEARTS	24
IX. IN THE STREET	27
X. SWORD-THRUSTS	30
XI. GENERAL BUSTAMENTE	33
XII. THE SPY	36
XIII. LOVE	40
XIV. THE QUINTA VERDE.	43
XV. THE DEPARTURE	46
XVI. THE MEETING	49
XVII. THE PUELCHEES	51
XVIII. THE BLACK JACKAL	54
XIX. TWO OLD FRIENDS.	56
XX. THE SORCERER.	60
XXI. THE OBSEQUIES OF AN APO-ULMEN	64
XXII. EXPLANATIONS.	66
XXIII. HOW TO COOK AN EGG	71
XXIV. THE SUN-TIGER	73
XXV. THE MATRICIDE	76
XXVI. THE JUSTICE OF THE DARK HEARTS	79
XXVII. THE TREATY OF PEACE	81
XXVIII. THE ABDUCTION	83
XXIX. THE PROTEST	86
XXX. SPANIARD AND INDIAN	89
XXXI. IN THE MOUNTAIN	92
XXXII. ON THE WATCH	93
XXXIII. FACE TO FACE	96
XXXIV. THE REVOLT	98
XXXV. THE LION AT BAY	100
XXXVI. THE TRUCE	102
XXXVII. TWO ROGUISH PROFILES	105
XXXVIII. THE WOUNDED MAN	107
XXXIX. ARAUCANIAN DIPLOMACY	110
XL. THE COUNCIL	112
XLI. TWO HATREDS	114
XLII. THE RETURN TO VALDIVIA.	116
XLIII. THE FATHER REVEALS HIMSELF	118
XLIV. CURUMILLA	119

THE ADVENTURERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHAPARRAL.

DURING my last sojourn in America, chance, or rather my good star, led me to form an acquaintance with one of those hunters the type of whom has been immortalised by Cooper.

The strange circumstance by which we were brought together was as follows. Towards the end of July, 1855, I had left Galveston, terrified at the fevers prevalent there, which are so fatal to Europeans, with the intention of visiting the north-west portion of Texas, a country I was then unacquainted with.

I carelessly wandered here and there, living that nomadic life which is so full of attractions; at times stopping at a *tolderia*, at others encamping in the desert, hunting wild animals. I had, in this fashion, passed through, without any untoward accident, Fredericksburgh, the Llana Braunfels, and had just left Castroville, on my way to Quichi. Castroville is nothing but a miserable agglomeration of ruined cabins, cut at right angles by streets choked with weeds, growing undisturbed, and concealing multitudes of ants, reptiles, and even rabbits of a very small breed, which spring up beneath the feet of the few passengers.

At Galveston I had undertaken to deliver a letter to an inhabitant of Castroville. Charmed by the arrival of a stranger who, no doubt, brought him news for which he had been long anxious, he received me in the most cordial manner. Unfortunately, the little I had seen of Castroville had sufficed to completely disgust me with it, and my only wish was to get out of it as quickly as possible.

"Adieu, then," said my host, warmly pressing my hand, with a sigh of regret; "since you are determined to go, may God protect you! You are wrong in setting out so late; the road you have to travel is dangerous."

I smiled at this warning, which I took for a last effort of a worthy man to detain me.

"Bah!" I replied gaily; "the Indians and I are too old acquaintances for me to fear anything."

My host shook his head and retreated into his hut, making me a last farewell greeting. I again set forward. I soon began to reflect that it was full late, and pressed my horse, in order to pass, before nightfall, a chaparral, or large thicket of underwood, of at least two miles in length, against which my host had particularly warned me. This ill-famed spot had a very sinister aspect. The mezquite, the acacia, and the cactus constituted its sole vegetation, while here and there whitened bones and planted crosses plainly designated places where murders had been committed. Beyond that extended a vast plain, called the Leona, covered by grass at least two feet in height, and dotted at intervals with thickets of trees, upon which warbled thousands of golden-throated starlings, cardinals, and blue-birds.

I was beginning to hope I should reach the Leona safe and sound, when, all at once, my horse made a violent bound on one side, pricking up its ears, and snorting loudly. The sudden shock almost threw me out of the saddle. As always happens in such cases, I instinctively looked round me for the cause of this panic, and soon the truth was revealed to me. A cold perspiration bedewed my brow, and a shudder of terror ran through my whole frame, at the horrible spectacle which met my eyes. Five dead bodies lay stretched beneath the trees within ten paces of me. Among them was one of a woman and one of a girl about fourteen years of age. They all belonged to the white race. They appeared to have fought long and obstinately before they fell; they were literally covered with wounds; and long arrows, with jagged barbs, and painted red, stood out from the bodies, which were pierced through and through. The victims had all been scalped. It was evidently the work of Indians, marked with their sanguinary rage and their inveterate hatred for the white race.

At the aspect of this heart-breaking spectacle I cannot express the pity and grief which weighed upon my spirits; high in the air urubus and vultures hovered with lazy wings over the bodies, uttering lugubrious cries of joy, whilst in the depths of the chaparral the wolves and jaguars began to growl portentously.

I cast a melancholy glance around: all immediately near to me was quiet. The Apaches had, according to all appearances, surprised the emigrants during a halt. Gutted bales were still ranged in a symmetrical circle, and a fire was not yet extinguished.

"No!" said I to myself, "whatever may happen, I will not leave Christians without burial."

My resolution, once formed, was soon carried into execution. Springing to the ground, I hobbled my horse, gave it some provender, and cast some branches of wood upon the fire, which soon sparkled and sent into the air a column of bright flame. Among the necessities of the emigrants were spades and pick-axes, which, being of no use to the Indians, they had disdainfully left behind them. I at once seized a spade, and set to work to dig a grave.

Except two or three alarms, caused by the rustling of the leaves in the bushes, nothing occurred to interrupt my melancholy duty. In less than three-quarters of an hour I had dug a grave large enough to contain the five bodies. After extracting the arrows, by which they were transfixed, I raised them one after the other in my arms, and laid them gently side by side at the bottom of the grave. I then hastened to throw in the mould again till it was level with the sod; and that being done, I dragged upon the surface all the large stones I could find, to keep wild beasts from profaning the dead. This duty accomplished, I bowed my head towards the ground, mentally addressing a short prayer to the Almighty for the unfortunate beings I had buried.

Upon raising my head I uttered a cry of surprise and terror, while at the same time mechanically feeling for my revolver; for without the least noise having given me warning of his approach, a man was standing within four paces of me, watching me earnestly, and leaning on his long rifle. Two magnificent Newfoundland dogs were lying carelessly but quietly at his feet.

"Fear nothing!" he said. "I am a friend. You have buried these poor people; I have avenged them—their assassins are dead."

I silently pressed the hand that was so frankly extended to me.

The companion I had fallen in with in so curious a manner was a man of about forty-five years of age, although he did not appear to be more than thirty-two. He was tall and well made; his broad shoulders and muscular

limbs denoting extraordinary strength and agility. He wore the picturesque hunter's costume in all its purity, that is to say, the capote or surtout (which is nothing but a kind of blanket worn as a robe, fastened to the shoulders, and falling in long folds behind), a shirt of striped cotton, large mitasses (drawers of doeskin, stitched with hair, fastened at distances, and ornamented with little bells), leather gaiters, mocassins of elk-skin, braided with beads and porcupine-quills, and a checked woollen belt, from which hung his knife, tobacco-pouch, powder-horn, pistols, and medicine-bag. His head-dress consisted of a cap made of the skin of a beaver, the tail of which fell between his shoulders. This man was a type of a hardy race of adventurers who traverse America in all directions—a primitive race, longing for open air, space, and liberty, opposed to our ideas of civilisation, and consequently destined to disappear before the immigration of the laborious races, whose powerful agents of conquest are steam and the application of mechanical inventions of all kinds.

This hunter was a Frenchman, and his frank, manly countenance, his picturesque language, his open and engaging manners, notwithstanding his long abode in America, had preserved a reflex of the mother country which awakened sympathy and created interest.

All the countries of the New World were familiar to him; he had lived more than twenty years in the depths of the woods, and had been engaged in dangerous and distant excursions among the Indian tribes. Hence, although myself well initiated in the customs of the red-skins, and though a great part of my existence had been passed in the desert, I have felt myself often shudder involuntarily at the recital of his adventures. When seated beside him on the banks of the Rio Gila, during an excursion we had undertaken into the prairies, he would at times allow himself to be carried away by his remembrances, and relate to me, as he smoked his Indian pipe, the strange history of the early days of his abode in the New World. It is one of these recitals I am about to lay before my readers—the first in order of date, since it is the history of the events which led him to become a woodranger.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOSTER-BROTHERS.

ON the 31st of December, 1834, at eleven o'clock in the evening, a man of about twenty-five years of age, of handsome person and countenance and aristocratic appearance, was reclining, in a luxurious easy-chair, near a massive grate within which sparkled a bright fire. This personage was the Count Maxime Edouard Louis de Prebois-Crance. His countenance, of a cadaverous paleness, formed a striking contrast with his black curly hair, which fell in disorder upon his shoulders. His brows were knit, and his eyes were fixed with feverish impatience upon the dial of a clock, whilst his left hand, hanging carelessly by his side, played with the silky ears of a magnificent Newfoundland dog. The room in which the count was sitting was furnished with all the refinement of comfort invented by modern luxury. A four-branched chandelier, with rose-coloured wax candles, placed upon a table, was scarcely sufficient to enliven the room. Without, the rain was dashing against the windows violently, and the wind sighed in mysterious murmurs, which disposed the mind to melancholy. When the clock struck the hour the count started up, as if aroused from a dream.

"He will not come!" he said.

But at that moment the dog, which had been so motionless, sprang up and bounded towards the door, which opened, and a man appeared.

"Here you are at last!" the count exclaimed, advancing towards the new-comer. "I had begun to be afraid that you, like the rest, had forgotten me."

"I do not understand you, brother, but trust you will explain yourself," the other replied.

And drawing an easy-chair towards the fire, he sat down at the other side of the fire, in front of the count. The dog lay down between them.

The personage so anxiously expected by the count formed a strange contrast with him; for, just as M. de Prebois-Grance united in himself all the qualities which physically distinguish nobility of race, the other displayed all the lively, energetic strength of a true child of the people. He was a man of twenty-six years of age; tall, thin, and perfectly well proportioned; while his face, bronzed by the sun, and his marked features, lit up by blue eyes, sparkling with intelligence, wore an expression of bravery, mildness, and loyalty of character that created sympathy at first sight. He was dressed in the elegant uniform of a quartermaster-sergeant of the Spahis, and the Cross of the Legion of Honour glittered on his breast. With his head leaning on his right hand, a pensive brow and a thoughtful eye, he examined his friend attentively, whilst twisting his long, silky, light-coloured moustache with the other hand.

The count, shrinking before his earnest look, which appeared trying to read his most secret thoughts, broke the silence abruptly.

"You have been a long time coming," he said.

"This is the second time you have addressed that reproach to me, Louis," the soldier replied, taking a paper from his breast; "you forget the terms of the note which your groom brought yesterday to my quarters."

"It is useless to read it," said the count, with a melancholy smile. "I acknowledge I am in the wrong."

"Well, then, let us see," said the Spahi gaily, "what this serious affair is which makes you stand in need of me. Explain: is there a woman to be carried off?"

"Nothing that you can possibly imagine," the count interrupted him bitterly; "therefore, do not waste time in useless surmises."

"What the devil is it, then?"

"I am going to blow out my brains."

The young man uttered these words with so firm and resolute an accent that the soldier started.

"You believe me mad, do you not?" the count continued. "No, I am not mad, Valentine; I am only at the bottom of an abyss from which I can only escape by death or infamy."

The soldier made no reply. With an energetic gesture he pushed back his chair, and began to walk about the room with hurried steps. The count had allowed his head to sink upon his breast in a state of perfect prostration of mind.

"A very strong reason must have obliged you to take such a determination," Valentine said, coolly; "I will not endeavour to combat it; but I command you, by our friendship, to tell me fully what has led you to form it."

"To what purpose?" cried the count, impatiently; "my sorrows are of a nature which none but he who experiences them can comprehend."

"A bad pretext, brother," replied the soldier, in a rough tone; "the sorrows we dare not avow are of a kind that make us blush."

"Valentine," said the count, with a flashing eye, "it is ill-judged to speak so."

"On the contrary, it is quite right," replied the young man, warmly. "I love you; I tell you the truth; why should I deceive you? You great gentlemen,

who have only known the trouble of coming into the world, know nothing of life but its joys; at the first rose-leaf which chance happens to ruffle in your bed of happiness you think yourselves lost, and appeal to that greatest of all cowardices—suicide.”

“Valentine!” the count cried, angrily.

“Yes,” continued the young man, with increased energy, “I repeat, that supreme cowardice! Your sorrows, indeed! I know well what they are.”

“You know?” demanded the count.

“Listen to me; and when I have told you my thoughts, why, kill yourself if you like. Pardieu! do you think when I came here I did not know why you summoned me? A gladiator, far too weak to fight the good fight, you have cast yourself defencelessly among the wild beasts of this terrible arena called Paris, and you have fallen, as was sure to be the case. But, remember, the death you contemplate will complete your dishonour.”

“Valentine—Valentine!” cried the count, “what gives you a right to speak to me thus?”

“My friendship,” the soldier replied, energetically, “and the position you have yourself placed me in by sending for me. Two causes reduce you to despair. These two causes are, in the first place, your love for a Creole, who has played with your heart as the panther of her own savannahs plays with the inoffensive animals she is preparing to devour. Is that true?”

The young man made no reply. With his elbows on the table, his face buried in his hands, he remained motionless.

Valentine continued—

“Secondly, when, in order to win favour in her eyes, you have compromised your fortune, this woman flits away as she came, rejoicing over the mischief she has done, over the victims she has left on the path she has trod, leaving to you and to so many others the despair and the shame of having been the sport of a coquette. I defy you to contradict me.”

“Well, I admit all that is true. It is that alone which kills me. But what care I for the loss of fortune? She alone is the object of my ambition! I love her—I love her—I tell you, so that I could struggle against the whole world to obtain her! Do you not plainly see the truth of what I say? There is nothing left me but to die!”

“Is this, then, more than a caprice? Do you really love this woman?” said Valentine, presently.

“Have I not told you that I am ready to die for her?”

“Ay; and you told me at the same time that you would struggle with the whole world to obtain her.”

“I did—and would.”

“Well, then,” continued Valentine, “I can help you to find this woman again—I can.”

“Oh! you are mad! She has left Paris, and no one knows into what region of America she has retreated.”

“Of what consequence is that?”

“And then, besides, I am ruined!”

“So much the better.”

“Valentine, be careful of what you say,” the young man remarked.

“Hope, man!—hope, I tell you.”

“Oh, no; no, that is impossible!”

“Nothing is impossible; that is a word invented by the impotent and the cowardly. I repeat that I not only will find this woman for you again, but that she shall be afraid lest you despise her love.”

"Oh!"

"Who knows? You yourself may then reject it."

"Valentine! Valentine!"

"Well, to obtain this glorious result, I only ask two years."

"So long?"

"Oh, such is man!" cried the soldier, with a faint, pitying laugh. "But an instant ago and you were anxious to die, because the world had never stood in its true light before you; and now you have not the courage to look forward two years!"

"Yes, but——"

"Be satisfied, brother—be satisfied! If in two years I have not fulfilled my promise, I myself will load your pistols, and then you shall not die alone," he said coolly.

The count looked at him. Valentine seemed transfigured: his countenance wore an expression of indomitable energy, which his foster-brother had never observed in it before; his eyes sparkled with unwonted brilliancy.

"I agree," he said warmly.

"You now, then, belong to me?"

"I give myself entirely up to you."

"That's well!"

"But what will you do?"

"Listen to me attentively," the soldier said, sinking back into his chair, and motioning to his friend to resume his seat. At this moment the clock struck the hour of midnight.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESOLUTION.

"I AM listening," said Louis, leaning forward as if to hear the better.

Valentine resumed with a melancholy smile.

"We have now reached the 1st of January, 1835," said he; "with the last vibration of midnight your existence as a gentleman has come to an end. From this time you are about to commence a life of trial.

The count gave him an inquiring glance.

"I will explain myself," Valentine continued; "but, in order to do that, you must, in the first place, allow me, in a few words, to recal your history to you."

"Surely, I am well enough acquainted with that," interrupted the count.

"Well, perhaps you are; but, at all events, listen to my version of it; if I err put me right."

"Follow your own humour," the count replied, sinking back in his chair.

"Your history is that of almost every man of your rank," began Valentine. "Your ancestors, whose name can be traced to the crusades, left you at your birth a noble title and a hundred thousand francs a year. Rich, without having had occasion to employ your faculties to gain your fortune, and consequently ignorant of the real value of money, you spent it heedlessly, believing it to be inexhaustible. Only, one day, the hideous spectre of ruin suddenly rose up before you, and then you drew back terrified, declaring there was no refuge but in death."

"All that is perfectly true," the count interrupted; "but you forget to

mention, that before forming this last resolution, I took care to put my affairs in order."

"But your life is not your own; it is a loan which God has made you. Every man who wastes the faculties which he holds from God in orgies and debaucheries commits a robbery upon the great human family. Remember that we are all mutually responsible for one another."

"For Heaven's sake, brother, a truce to your sermons! Such theories may succeed with some people, but——"

"Brother," Valentine interrupted, "do not speak so. In spite of yourself, your pride of race dictates words which you will ere long regret. Certain people! Oh, Louis, Louis! how many things you have yet to learn! But that we may know what we are about, reckoning all your resources, how much have you left?"

"About some forty thousand francs, I suppose, at most, which may amount to sixty thousand by the sale of these luxurious trifles," the count said carelessly.

"Sixty thousand francs!" cried Valentine; "and you are in despair, and have made up your mind to die. Why, sixty thousand francs well employed is a fortune!"

"What do you mean to do, then?"

"You shall see. What is the name of the lady you are in love with?"

"Dona Rosario del Valle."

"Very well. She has, you say, gone to America?"

"Ten days ago; but I, in justice, must observe to you, that Dona Rosario, whom you do not know, is a noble and amiable girl."

"Ah, that is very possible! Why, then, should I seek to rob you of this sweet illusion? Only it makes me the more puzzled to perceive how, under these circumstances, you could manage to melt your fortune."

"Here! read this note from my broker."

"Oh!" said Valentine, pushing back the paper; "you have been dabbling on the Stock Exchange, have you? Everything is now easily explained, my poor pigeon! Well, brother, you must take your revenge."

"Oh, I ask nothing better!" said the young man.

"We are of the same age; my mother's milk nourished us both; in the eyes of God we are brothers! I will make a man of you! Whilst you, protected by your name and your fortune, allowed life to glide luxuriously away, I, a poor wretch wandering over the rough pavement of Paris, carried on a gigantic struggle to obtain a mere existence; a struggle of every hour and every minute, where the victory for me was a morsel of bread and experience most dearly bought. But courage, Louis! Henceforth there will be two of us to fight the battle! You shall be the head to conceive, I the arm to execute; you the intelligence, I the strength! Now the struggle will be equal, for we will sustain one another."

"I can fully appreciate your devotion, and I accept it. Am I not, at present, your property? Entertain no fear of my resisting you. But I cannot help telling you that I fear all my attempts will be in vain."

"Oh, thou man of little faith!" Valentine said cheerfully; "on the road which we are about to take fortune will be our slave!"

Louis could not repress a smile.

"We must, at all events, depend upon the aid of chance in what we are about to undertake," he said.

"Chance! Chance is the hope of fools."

"Well, but what do you mean to do?"

"The lady you love is in America, is she not?"

"Yes, but I do not know even in what part of America."

"Of what consequence is that? The New World is the country of gold—the true region of adventurers! But, tell me—this lady was born somewhere?"

"She is a Chilian."

"Good! she has gone back to Chili, then; and it is there we shall find her."

"What! do you seriously mean that you will do this, brother?" he said in an agitated voice.

"Without hesitation."

"But I know that in three months you will be an officer."

"I have ceased to be a soldier since the morning; I have found a substitute."

"But your old mother, my nurse, whose only support you are!"

"We will give her a few thousand francs, which will suffice for her to live on; we come back."

"Oh," said the young man, "I cannot accept of such a sacrifice—my honour forbids it!"

"Unfortunately, brother," Valentine said, in a tone which silenced the count, "you have it not in your power to prevent it."

"I do not understand you."

"Listen then. When, after having nursed you, my mother restored you to your family, my father fell sick and died, leaving my mother and myself in the greatest want; the little we possessed had been spent in medicines and in paying the doctor for his visits. We ought to have had recourse to your family, but my mother would never consent. 'The Count de Prebois-Crance has done as much as he ought,' she remarked; 'he shall not be troubled any more.'"

"She was wrong," said Louis.

"I know she was," Valentine replied. "Hunger soon began to be felt. It was then I undertook all sorts of those impossible trades. One day, as I was carrying my cap round in the Place du Trone, after swallowing sabres and eating fire, to the great delight of the crowd, I found myself face to face with an officer of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, who looked at me with an air of pity and kindness. He led me away with him, made me relate my history, and insisted upon being conducted to the shed where I and my mother lived. At the sight of our misery the soldier was much affected; Louis, that officer was your father."

"My noble and good father!" the count exclaimed.

"Yes! yes, noble and good! He secured my mother a little annuity which enables her to live, and took me into his own regiment. Two years ago, during the last expedition against the Bey of Constantine, your father was struck by a bullet in his chest, and died."

"Yes," the young man said, "I know he did."

"But what you do not know, Louis, is, that at the point of death your father turned towards me."

"Valentine," he said to me, in a faint voice, 'my son is left alone, and without experience; he has nobody but you, his foster-brother. Watch over him—never abandon him! May I depend upon your promise? it will mitigate the pain of dying.' I knelt down beside him, and, respectfully seizing the hand he held out to me, exclaimed—'Die in peace! in the hour of adversity I will always be by the side of your Louis.' Can you not now comprehend, then, why I have spoken to you as I have done? While you held your course in your strength, I kept aloof; but now that the hour has arrived for accomplishing my vow, no human power can prevent me from doing so."

The two young men were silent for a moment, and then Louis said—

"When shall we set out, brother?"

The latter looked at him earnestly—

"You are fully resolved to commence a new life?"

"Entirely!" Louis replied, in a firm tone.

"Do you leave no regrets behind you?"

"None."

"You are ready to pass bravely through all the trials to which I may expose you?"

"I am."

"That is well, brother! It is thus I wish you to be."

* * * * *

On the 2nd of February, 1835, a packet-boat belonging to the Transatlantic Company left Havre, directing its course towards Valparaiso. On board this vessel, as passengers, were the Count de Prebois-Crance, Valentine Guillois, his foster-brother, and Cæsar, their Newfoundland dog—Cæsar, the only friend who had remained faithful to them, and whom they could not think of leaving behind. Upon the quay a woman of about sixty years of age, her face bathed in tears, stood with her eyes intently fixed upon the vessel as long as it remained in sight.

This woman was the mother of Valentine Guillois. She was the most to be pitied, for she was left alone!

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXECUTION.

SANTIAGO, the capital of Chili, is one of the finest cities in Spanish America. Its streets are broad, built in straight lines, and refreshed by acequias, or rivulets of clear and limpid water; while the houses, built of adobes, only one storey high on account of the earthquakes so frequent in this country, are vast, airy, and well situated. It possesses a great number of monuments, the most remarkable of which are the stone bridge of five arches thrown over the Mapocho, and the Tajamar, or breakwater, formed of two brick walls, the interior one of which is filled with earth, and serves to protect the inhabitants, from inundations. The Cordilleras, with their eternally snow-crowned summits although eighty miles distant from the city, appear suspended over it, and present an aspect of the most majestic and imposing kind.

On the 5th of May, 1835, towards ten o'clock in the evening, stifling heat oppressed the city; there was not a breath in the air or a cloud in the heavens. Santiago, generally so joyous at this hour of the night, when beams from black eyes and smiles from rosy lips are seen at every balcony, and each window seems to challenge the passer-by with the twanging of sambecuejas and snatches of Creole songs, appeared plunged in the deepest sadness. The balconies and the windows were filled, it is true, with the heads of men and women, packed together as closely as possible, but the expression of every face was serious, every look was thoughtful and uneasy: no smile, no joy could be witnessed.

Here and there numerous groups were stationed in the middle of the causeway, or upon the steps of the doors, conversing in a low voice. At every instant orderly officers galloped off in various directions. Detachments of

troops quitted their barracks, and marched, with drums beating, to the Plaza Mayor, where they formed in line, passing silently amidst the terrified inhabitants. The Plaza Mayor on this evening afforded an exceptional appearance. Torches, waved about by individuals mixed with the crowd, threw their red dull reflections upon the assembled people, who seemed to be in expectation of some great event.

But among all these people assembled on one spot, and whose number increased every second, not a cry could be heard. Only at intervals, there arose a nameless murmur—a noise of the sea before a tempest—the whisper of a whole anxious people—the hoarse fury of a storm lashing all these oppressed breasts. The clock of the cathedral heavily and slowly struck ten.

Scarce had the serenitas, according to custom, chanted the hour, ere military commands were heard, and the crowd violently driven back in all directions, with cries and oaths, accompanied by blows from gun-stocks, divided in two nearly equal parts, leaving between them a wide space. At this moment arose the sounds of religious chants, murmured in a low, monotonous tone, and a long procession of monks debouched upon the square. These monks belonged to the Order of Mercy. They walked slowly in two lines, with their hoods pulled down over their faces, their arms crossed over their breasts, their heads hanging down, and chanting the *De Profundis*. In the middle of them ten penitents each bore an open coffin. Then came a squadron of cavalry, preceding a battalion of militiamen, in the centre of which body, ten men, bare headed, with their arms bound behind them, were conducted, each riding with his face toward the tail of a donkey.

At the cry of halt the monks separated to the right and left, without interrupting their funeral chant, and the condemned remained alone in the middle of the space left free. These men were patriots who had attempted to overthrow the established government, and belonged to the best families of the country.

The population of Santiago viewed with sullen despair the death of these men. It is even probable that a rising in their favour would have taken place, if General Bustamante, the minister-at-war, had not drawn out a military force capable of imposing upon the most determined.

The condemned alighted; they piously knelt, and confessed themselves to the monks of Mercy, whilst a platoon of fifty soldiers took up a position within twenty paces. When their confession was completed they rose up, and, taking each other by the hand, ranged themselves in a single line in front of the soldiers appointed to put them to death. In spite, however, of the great numbers of troops, an ominous fermentation prevailed among the people. The crowd rocked about in all directions. Murmurs of sinister augury and curses, pronounced aloud against the agents of power, seemed to remind the latter that they had better finish the affair at once.

General Bustamante, who calmly and stoically presided over this dismal ceremony, smiled with disdain. He waved his sword over his head and commanded "right about face," which was executed with the rapidity of lightning. The troops faced the insurgents on all sides; the front ranks pointing their muskets at the citizens crowded together before them, whilst the others appeared to take aim at the balconies encumbered with people. This was followed by so dead a silence that not a word was lost of the sentence read by the proper officer—a sentence which condemned them to be shot as traitors.

The conspirators listened to their sentence with silent firmness; but when the officer had finished reading it, they all cried, as with one voice—

"Viva la Patria! Viva la Libertad!"

The general gave a signal, and the loud rolling of the drums drowned the voices of the condemned. A discharge of musketry resounded like a clap of thunder, and the ten martyrs fell, once again shouting their cry of liberty—a cry doomed to find an echo in the hearts of their terrified compatriots.

The troops filed off, with shouldered arms, ensigns flying, and band at their head, past the dead bodies, and regained their barracks. When the general had disappeared with his escort, and the troops had left the plaza, the people rushed in a mass towards the spot where the martyrs of their cause lay in a confused heap. Every one wished to offer them a last farewell.

At length, by degrees, the crowd became less compact, the groups dispersed, the last torches were extinguished, and the spot where, scarce an hour before, an awful drama had been accomplished, was left completely deserted.

Suddenly, a heavy sigh escaped from the heap of bodies, and a pale head, disfigured by the blood and dirt which stained it, arose slowly from this human slaughter-house, pushing aside with difficulty the carcasses which had covered it. The victim, who, by a miracle, survived this bloody hecatomb, cast an anxious look around him, and, passing his hand over his brow, said—

“My God! my God! grant me strength to live, that I may avenge myself and my country.”

Then, with incredible courage, this man, too weak from the blood he had lost, and was still losing, to stand, or to escape by walking away, began to crawl along upon his hands and knees, leaving behind him a long wet track, and directing his course towards the cathedral. At every yard he stopped to take breath. Scarce had he left the centre of the plaza and its horrid sacrifice fifty paces behind him, and that with immense difficulty, when, from a street which opened just before him, issued two men.

“Oh!” the unhappy man cried, in utter despair, “I am lost! I am lost! Heaven is not just!” And he fainted.

The two men, on coming up to him, stopped with great surprise; they leant over him, and examined him with care and in an anxious manner.

“Well?” said one of them, at the end of a minute or two.

“He is alive,” the other replied.

Without uttering another word, they rolled up the wounded man in a poncho, lifted him on their shoulders, and disappeared in the gloomy depths of the street by which they had come.

CHAPTER V.

THE PASSAGE.

It is a long voyage from Havre to Chili. The man accustomed to the atmosphere of Paris necessarily finds the life on shipboard insipid and monotonous. It is certainly tedious to remain months together in a vessel, confined to a cabin a few feet square, without air and without sun, almost without light, and to have no walk but the narrow deck of the ship, no horizon but the rolling of the tranquil sea—at all times and everywhere nothing but sea.

The Count de Prebois-Crance and Valentine Guillois had undergone the dispersion of all the illusions and all the ennui attendant upon a first sea voyage. During the first days they were employed in recalling the vivid remembrance of that other life from which they had parted for ever. They talked over the surprise which the sudden disappearance of the count would

cause in the fashionable society from which he had fled without warning, and without leaving any means of tracing him. Forgetting for a while the distance which separated them from the America to which they were bound, they dwelt at great length upon the unknown pleasures which awaited them upon that golden soil, that land of promise for all sorts of adventurers, but which, alas ! often offers those who go thither in the hope of gaining an easy fortune nothing but disappointment and sorrow.

Often during the passage the young count had felt his courage flag, and his faith in the future abandon him, when thinking of the life of struggles and trials that awaited him in America. But Valentine, by his inexhaustible gaiety, his incredible store of anecdotes, and his incessant sallies, always succeeded in smoothing the wrinkles from the brow of his companion, who, with his habitual carelessness and want of energy, allowed himself to sink under that occult influence of Valentine which remoulded him, without his cognisance, and gradually made a new man of him.

Such was the state of mind in which our two personages found themselves when the packet-boat cast anchor in the roads of Valparaiso. Valentine, with his imperturbable assurance, was persuaded that the people he was about to have to do with were very much beneath him in intelligence, and that he could manage very well to attain the double object which he aimed at. The count entirely depended upon his foster-brother for finding for him the woman he loved, and whom he had come so far to seek. As to retrieving his fortune, he did not even dream of that.

Valparaiso—Valley of Paradise—so named probably by antiphrasis, for it is the filthiest and ugliest city in Spanish America—is nothing but a depot for foreigners, whom commercial interests do not call into Chili. Our young men only remained there long enough to equip themselves in the costume of the country ; that is to say, to assume the Panama hat, the poncho, and polenas ; then, each armed with two double-barrelled pistols, a rifle, and a long knife in his belt, they took their course towards Santiago on the evening preceding the day on which the execution we have described in the preceding chapter was to take place. The weather was magnificent ; the rays of a burning sun rendered the very dust golden, and made the stones of the road shine like jewels.

“ Ah ! ” said Valentine, as soon as they found themselves upon the superb road which leads to the capital of Chili ; “ it does one good to breathe the air of the land. Well, now, here we are in this boasted America, and now we must set about collecting our harvest of gold.”

“ And Dona Rosario ? ” said his foster-brother, in a melancholy tone.

“ Oh ! we shall have found her within a fortnight,” replied Valentine, with astounding confidence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LINDA.

THE night was gloomy ; no star glittered in the heavens ; the moon, concealed by clouds, only spread a wan, pale light, which, when it disappeared, rendered the darkness the denser. The streets were deserted ; but at regular intervals the furtive steps of the serenos, who alone watched at this hour, were audible.

The two men whom we have seen upon the Plaza Mayor, bearing away the wounded man, walked for a long time, loaded with their strange burthen,

stopping at the least noise, and concealing themselves in the depths of a doorway, or in the angle of a street, to allow the serenos to pass, as they would be sure to require a reason for their being in the streets at that unusual hour. Since the discovery of the conspiracy, orders had been given that at eleven o'clock every citizen should be within doors. After many turnings and windings the strangers stopped in the street El Mercado, one of the most secluded and narrow in Santiago. They appeared to be expected, for a door was opened at the sound of their steps, and a woman, dressed in white, and holding a candle, the light of which she shaded with her left hand, appeared on the threshold. The two men stopped, and one of them, taking a steel from his pocket, struck the flint so as to produce as few sparks as possible. At this signal the woman extinguished the light, saying with a loud voice—

"Dios proteja a Chili (May God protect Chili)."

"Dios lo ha protegido (God has protected it)," the man with the flint and steel replied.

The woman uttered a cry of joy.

"Come in, come in," she said, in a low voice; and in an instant the two men were beside her.

"Is he alive?" she asked, with intense anxiety.

"He is alive," one of the strangers laconically replied.

The bearers, guided by the woman, who had relighted her candle, disappeared in the house. All the houses of Santiago are alike. To describe one is to describe all. A wide doorway, ornamented with pilasters, leads to the great entrance-court, at the end of which is the principal apartment, generally the dining-room. On each side are bed-chambers, reception-rooms, and cabinets for labour or study. Behind these apartments is the *huerta*, or garden, laid out with taste, ornamented with fountains, and planted with orange-trees, citron-trees, pomegranates, limes, cedars, and palm-trees, which grow with incredible luxuriance.

The house into which we have introduced the reader only differed from the others in the princely luxury of its furniture. The two men, still preceded by the woman, who served them as guide, entered a little room, whose window opened on the garden. They laid their burden down upon a bed, and retired without speaking a word.

The woman remained for a moment motionless, listening to the sound of their retreating footsteps; and when all was silent she sprang with a bound towards the door, the bolts of which she fastened with an impetuous gesture, then returned and placed herself beside the wounded man.

This woman, though really thirty-five years of age, appeared to be scarcely more than five-and-twenty. She was of an extraordinary, but a strange style of beauty; it attracted attention, commanded admiration, but created an instinctive repulsion. In spite of the majestic splendour of her graceful form, the elegance of her carriage, the freedom of her motions, full of voluptuous ease—in spite of the purity of the lines of her fair face, slightly tinged by the warm rays of an American sun, which the magnificent tresses of her black hair beautifully enframed, her large black eyes, ornamented with long velvety lashes, and crowned by perfectly-arched brows, her straight nose, with its mobile and rosy nostrils, her little mouth, whose blood-red lips contrasted admirably with her pearl-white teeth—in spite of all these rich endowments, there was in this splendid creature something fatal which chilled the heart as you contemplated her. Her searching glance, the satirical smile which almost always contracted the corners of her lips, the slight wrinkle, which formed a harsh, deep line along her white brow—everything about her, even to the melodious sound of her

voice, with its strongly-accentuated pitch, destroyed sympathy, and produced a feeling of hatred rather than respect.

Alone in that chamber, dimly lighted by one flickering taper, in that calm and silent night, face to face with that pale, bleeding man, whom she contemplated with stern, contracted brows, she resembled, with her long black hair, falling in disorder from her shoulders on to her white robe, a Thessalian witch, preparing herself to accomplish some terrible and mysterious work.

The stranger was a man of forty-five years of age, of lofty stature, strongly built, and well proportioned. His features were handsome, his brow noble, and the expression of his countenance resolute.

The woman remained for a considerable time in mute contemplation. At length words forced their way through her compressed lips.

"Here he is, then; this time, at least, he is in my power! Will he consent to answer me?"

She paused to breathe a deep, broken sigh, but almost immediately continued—

"My daughter! of whom this man has bereaved me! and whom, in spite of all my researches, he has hitherto concealed. My daughter! he must restore her to me; it is my will!" she added with inexpressible energy. "He shall, even if I had to deliver him up again to the executioners! These wounds are nothing; loss of blood and terror are the sole causes of this insensibility. But time passes. Why should I hesitate longer? Let me at once know what I have to hope. Perhaps he will allow himself to be softened by my tears and prayers. No, he will laugh at my grief; he will reply by sarcasms to my cries of despair. Oh! woe, woe be to him if he do so! But I will try." And in a convulsive manner she drew from her bosom a small crystal phial, curiously cut, and made the unknown inhale the contents. This was followed by a moment of intense expectation; the woman watching with an anxious eye the convulsive movements which are the precursors of the return to life, as they agitated the body of the wounded man. At length, with a deep sigh, he opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he murmured in a faint voice.

"In safety," the woman replied.

The sound of the voice produced upon the wounded man the effect of an electric shock. He raised himself quickly, and looking around him with a mixture of disgust, terror, and anger, asked in a hollow voice—

"Who spoke?"

"I!" the woman replied haughtily.

"Ah!" he said with a gesture of disgust, "you again!"

"Yes, I! still I, Don Tadeo! I, whose will, in spite of your disdain, has never faltered! I, in short, whose assistance you have always obstinately refused, and who have saved you."

"Oh! that is easy, madam; are you not on the best possible terms with my executioners?"

At this reply the woman could not repress a movement of anger; a sudden redness flitted across her face.

"No insults, Don Tadeo!" she said, stamping her foot; "I am a woman, and you are under my roof!"

"That is true," he replied, rising and bowing to her with ironical respect; "I had forgotten that, madam; I am in your house. Have the goodness, then, to direct me the way out."

"Do not be in such haste, Don Tadeo; you have not yet sufficiently recovered your strength. Within a few steps you would be captured by your foes."

"And who told you, madam, that I should not prefer being retaken and executed a second time to the chance of remaining longer in your presence?"

"Listen to me, Don Tadeo," said the woman. "In spite of all your efforts, destiny, woman's genius, has brought us together once again. If you live, it is because I lavished my gold upon the soldiers charged with your execution. I wished to force you to that explanation which I have so long demanded of you. Submit, then, with a good grace. We will afterwards separate, if not good friends, at least indifferent, never to meet again. Though I do not wish to establish any claim upon your gratitude, you certainly owe your life to me."

"What! madam," Don Tadeo replied, proudly, "do you think that I consider what you have done was a service? By what right have you saved me? You know me but ill if you fancied I should allow myself to be softened by your tears. No, no, I have been too long your dupe and your slave to do so. Heaven be praised! I know you well now; and the linda, the mistress of General Bustamente, the tyrant of my country, the executioner of my brothers and myself, has nothing to expect from me! Away, madam!—away! There can be nothing in common between you and me."

And with a gesture of proud authority he waved her from him.

The woman had listened to him with flashing eyes and heaving bosom, trembling with rage and shame. Drops of perspiration stood upon her face, which glowed with a feverish redness. When he had finished she seized his arm, pressed it with her utmost strength, and placed her face close to his.

"Have you said all?" she muttered from between her teeth. "Have you heaped insults enough upon me? Have you nothing more to add?"

"Nothing, madam," he replied. "You can, when you please, summon your assassins; I am ready."

CHAPTER VII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

DONA MARIA, notwithstanding the fresh and bitter insult she had just received from Don Tadeo, did not yet renounce the hope of softening him. When she recalled to her mind the early years, already so distant, of her love for Don Tadeo, his devotion to her smallest caprices, when she could bring him trembling and prostrate to her feet by a glance or a smile, and the entire abnegation he had made of his will in order to live for her and by her; notwithstanding all that had since taken place, she could not persuade herself that the violent and deeply-seated passion he had entertained for her could have entirely disappeared. Her pride revolted at the idea of having lost all her empire over the lofty nature which she so long had moulded at her pleasure. She fancied that, like most other men, Don Tadeo, deeply wounded in his pride, loved her still without being willing to admit it.

Unfortunately Dona Maria had never given herself the trouble to study the man she had married. Don Tadeo had been nothing in her eyes but an attentive, submissive slave, and, under the apparent weakness of the loving man, she had not discovered the powerful energy which formed the foundation of his character. Dona Maria, when fifteen years of age, dwelt with her father in a *hacienda*, in the neighbourhood of Santiago. Deprived of her mother, who had died in giving her birth, she was brought up under the care of an old aunt, who allowed no lover to come near her niece. The young girl, ignorant as all

girls brought up in the country are, but whose warm aspirations led her to desire to know the world, waited impatiently the arrival of the man who should introduce her to its delights. Don Tadeo had only been the guide charged with initiating her into the pleasures for which she thirsted. She had never loved him; she had only said to herself, on seeing him and learning he was of a noble family, "That is the man."

This hideous and selfish calculation is made by more girls than we fancy. Don Tadeo was handsome. Dona Maria's self-love was flattered by the conquest; but if he had been ugly and disagreeable it would not have altered her course. In her extraordinary character, there was the spirit of two women of ancient Rome; Locusta and Messalina were united in her: ardent, passionate, and ambitious, covetous and prodigal, this demon, concealed under the outward form of an angel, acknowledged no other laws but her own caprices.

For a long time, Don Tadeo, blinded by passion, had submitted without complaining to the iron yoke of this infernal genius; but when the day arrived that the scales fell from his eyes he measured with terror the depth of the abyss into which this woman had cast him.

Don Tadeo had by Maria an only daughter, a fair girl of angelic beauty, at the period of our history fifteen years of age, whom he deeply loved. He trembled to think of the frightful future which lay before this innocent creature. For four years he had been separated from his wife, and during that time she had set no bounds on her irregularities. One day Don Tadeo presented himself unexpectedly at the house of his wife, and, without saying a word as to his ulterior intentions, took away his daughter. From that time—nearly ten years—Dona Maria had never seen her child.

Such was, at the moment we bring them on the scene, the position of the two personages who now doubtless met for the last time. It was an extraordinary position for both; an unequal contest between a wounded and proscribed man, and an ardent, insulted woman, who, like a lioness deprived of her whelps, was resolved to succeed, whatever might happen, and compel the man whom she had forced to hear her to restore her daughter to her.

Don Tadeo turned towards her.

"I am waiting," he said.

"You are waiting?" she replied, with a friendly smile. "What do you expect, then?"

"The assassins whom you doubtless have at hand."

"Oh!" she said, with an air of repulsion, "how can you, Don Tadeo, have so bad an opinion of me? How can you pretend to believe that, after having saved you, I should deliver you again?"

"Who knows?" he replied, in a strongly ironical tone. "The heart of women of your class, *linda*, is an abyss which no man can pretend to sound."

"Don Tadeo, I know how unworthy my conduct towards you has been, and how little I deserve your pity; but you are a gentleman, and, as such do you think it does you honour to load with insults, however merited, a woman who is your wife?"

"Very well, madam; nothing can be more just than your observations, and I subscribe to them with all my heart. I beg you to pardon me for having allowed myself to utter certain words; but, at the first movement, I was not master of myself, and I could not keep down in the depths of my heart the feelings which were stifling me. Now, accept my sincere thanks for the immense service you have rendered me, and permit me to retire, for I have no wish to remain here."

And, bowing with ironical courtesy to his infuriated wife, he made a movement towards one of the doors.

"Are you resolved to leave me ignorant of the fate of my daughter?" she said.

"She is dead."

"Dead!" she cried, in a voice of terror.

"For you—yes," he replied, with a cold smile.

"Oh, you are implacable!" she shrieked.

He bowed, without making any reply.

"Well, then," she resumed, "it is now no longer a favour I implore—it is a bargain I propose to you."

"A bargain?"

"Yes, a bargain."

"The idea strikes me as original."

"Perhaps it is; you shall judge for yourself."

"I listen, but time presses, and I——"

"Oh, I will be brief," she interrupted.

"I am at your service," and he reseated himself, smiling, exactly like a friend on a visit.

"Don Tadeo," said the linda, during the many years we have been separated a great number of events has taken place."

"Quite correct," said he.

"I will say nothing to you of myself—my life is known to you."

"Very little of it, madam."

"Let that pass," she said, with a savage look at him; "it is of you I would speak."

"Of me?"

"Yes, of you, whose movements are not so completely absorbed by patriotism and the effervescence of political ideas as not to leave you a few more intimate joys."

"What do you mean?"

"Why do you feign ignorance?" she said.

"Madam!"

"Do not deny it, Tadeo! Tired of the ephemeral love of women of my class, as you have just now so well said, you seek in the pure heart of a young girl emotions more in accordance with your tastes; in a word, I know you are in love with a charming young creature."

Don Tadeo fixed upon his wife a scrutinising look while she pronounced these words. As she finished a sigh escaped him.

"What, are you aware?" he exclaimed, with well-feigned surprise. "You know——"

"I know that her name is Dona Rosario del Valle," she replied; "why it is the freshest news in Santiago! all the world is talking of it. How was it likely it should escape me?"

The linda interrupted herself, and laid her hand on his arm.

"It is of very little consequence," she added; "restore me my daughter, Don Tadeo, and this new love of yours shall be sacred to me—if not——"

"You are mistaken, madam, I tell you."

"Beware, Don Tadeo!" she remarked; "by this time the woman we are speaking of is in the hands of my agents."

"What do you mean?" he cried, in great agitation.

"Yes," she replied, "I have had her carried off. In a few minutes she will be here. Beware! I repeat, Don Tadeo! if you do not tell me where my daughter is."

"Well," he said, haughtily, looking her full in the face, and crossing his arms, "what then will you do?"

"I will kill this woman!" she replied, in a gloomy but firm tone.

Don Tadeo looked at her for a moment with an indefinable expression, and then burst into a dry, nervous laugh, which chilled the woman with fear.

"You will kill her!" he cried. "Unhappy woman! Well!—kill her! Call in your executioners!"

The linda sprang up like a lioness, and rushed towards the door, which she opened violently.

"This is too much! Come in!" she called out, loudly.

The two men who had brought in Don Tadeo appeared, poniard in hand.

"Ah!" the gentleman said, with a contemptuous smile, "I know you again at last."

At a motion from the linda the assassins advanced towards him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DARK HEARTS.

As we have seen, the people had dispersed after the execution of the patriots. Every one carried away in the depths of his heart the hope of avenging, at an early day, the victims who had so nobly died.

And yet the square, though it seemed a desert, was not so. Several men, in dark cloaks, and with broad-brimmed hats pulled down over their eyes, were grouped in the recess of the coach entrance of a house, and were conversing earnestly together in a low voice.

In spite of the terror which hovered over the city, they had, by dint of prayers, obtained from the Archbishop of Santiago, who was a true priest, and at heart devoted to the liberal cause, permission to pay the last rites to their unfortunate brethren.

No part of the dismal drama which followed the execution had escaped them. They had seen Don Tadeo rise like a phantom from the heap of carcases which covered him; they had heard the words he had pronounced, and were preparing to go to his succour, when the two strangers, appearing suddenly, raised his body and bore it away. Two of the men went in pursuit of the mysterious strangers, probably in order to learn to what house the wounded man was taken.

The rest anxiously bent down and examined the bodies stretched at their feet, hoping, perhaps, that another victim might have escaped the slaughter. Unfortunately, Don Tadeo was the only one saved by some inexplicable mystery. The nine other victims were all dead. After a long examination, the patriots stood up again with a painful sigh of regret, and one of them went and knocked at a lower door of the cathedral.

"Who is there?" was asked from the interior.

"One for whom the night hath no darkness."

"What do you want?" the voice asked again.

"Is it not written: Knock and it shall be opened to thee?" the stranger added.

"Our country!" said the voice.

"Or vengeance!" the man promptly replied.

The door opened, and a monk appeared.

Well," he said, "what do the Dark Hearts require?"

"A prayer for their murdered brothers."

"Return to those who sent you; they shall be satisfied."

"Thanks for all!" the unknown replied; and, after bowing respectfully to the monk, he rejoined his companions, who had placed the bodies upon hand-barrows concealed under the arcades of the place.

At the expiration of a few minutes a brilliant light inundated the place; the cathedral doors were opened. The interior was seen to be splendidly illuminated, and from the principal door issued a long procession of monks, each bearing a wax light in his hand; they chanted, as they walked, the service of the dead. At the same moment the gates of the government palace were thrown open as if by enchantment, and a squadron of the Ceras, with General Bustamente at their head, advanced at a trot towards the procession.

When the monks and soldiers met, they stopped as of one accord. The twelve unknown men, folded in their cloaks, and grouped round the fountain which forms the centre of the square, waited anxiously.

"What is the meaning of this procession at such an unusual hour?" the general haughtily demanded.

"It means that we have come," the monk who walked first replied, with a firm voice, "to take up the victims you have struck down, and give them honourable burial."

"And who, pray, are you?" the general asked, sharply.

"I?" the monk replied, "I am the Archbishop of Santiago, Primate of Chili, invested by his holiness the Pope with the power of binding and unbinding on earth."

In Spanish America all persons yield without hesitation to the religion of Christ. The only power that is real is that of the priests. No one, however high he may be placed, ventures to struggle against it.

"My lord!" the general said, with a bow, "pardon me! In these times of civil discord, we often, in spite of ourselves, confound our friends with our enemies. I was ignorant that your lordship had given orders for prayers to be offered up for these criminals. I beg leave to retire."

During this scene the patriots had concealed themselves behind the pillars of the place, where, thanks to the darkness, they remained unseen by the general.

"Beware of that man, my lord," whispered one of the unknown in the archbishop's ear; "he darted at you the glance of a tiger as he retired."

"Brother!" the priest replied calmly, "I am prepared for martyrdom."

The service commenced. As soon as it was terminated the patriots retired. Scarce had they proceeded a few steps along a narrow street when two men rose from behind an overturned cart which concealed them, and coming towards them, said in a low voice—

"Our country!"

"Vengeance!" one of the unknown replied.

The two men approached.

"Well!" said the chief, "what have you learnt?"

"All that is possible to know," one of the new-comers replied.

"Whither have they transported Don Tadeo?"

"To the mansion of the linda."

"To the residence of his wife! Of the mistress of the General Bustamente!" the chief replied anxiously. "By the holy Virgin! my comrades, he is lost, for she hates him mortally. Shall we allow him to be assassinated?"

"That would be base cowardice," they replied unanimously.

"But how can we introduce ourselves into the house?"

"Nothing more easy; the garden walls are very low."

Without another word they all hastened off in the direction of the *linda's* house, which was situated in the handsomest quarter in Santiago. The windows, hermetically closed, did not allow one ray of light to pass. The patriots stole silently round the walls, and when they reached the back they easily climbed the fence by sticking their poniards between the bricks. Here they looked carefully about them, and, after a short pause, proceeded with stealthy steps towards a pale, trembling light, which sent a feeble beam through the clink of a shutter. They were within a few paces of this window, when they suddenly heard a noise of what appeared a scuffle. Bounding forward like panthers, the strangers, who had covered their faces with masks of black velvet, dashed at the window, and entered the salon.

And it was time. Don Tadeo, with a stool, had split the head of one of the bandits, who lay lifeless upon the floor; but the other had got him down, and, with his knee upon his breast, was on the point of stabbing him. With a pistol-shot one of the unknown blew out his brains. Don Tadeo sprang up quickly, exclaiming—

"By the Virgin! I thought my hour was come!" Then turning towards the masked men, he said—"Thanks, caballeros! thanks for your very timely succour! One minute more and it would have been all over with me! The *linda* is expeditious!"

The courtesan, with features contracted by rage, and clenched teeth, looked on without appearing to see, overwhelmed, confounded by the scene which had so rapidly taken place.

"Without bearing malice, madam," said Don Tadeo in a jeering tone, "this is a match deferred. Your fertile imagination will no doubt soon furnish you with the means of taking your revenge."

"I hope so," she said, with a sardonic smile.

"Seize this woman," the leader of the unknown commanded; "gag her, and bind her securely to the bed."

"Bind me!" she cried; "do you know who I am?"

"Perfectly well, madam," the stranger replied drily. "You are a woman for whom honourable people have no name."

"Beware, sir," she hissed; "I am not to be insulted with impunity."

"We do not insult you, madam; we only wish, for a time, to put it out of your power to do mischief. In a few days," he continued, in a quiet, firm tone, "we will determine what shall be done with you."

"Done with me!—me!—who then are you?"

"Who are we? Learn! We are the Dark Hearts!"

At this terrible announcement a convulsive trembling shook the limbs of the woman, who, retreating to the wall a prey to intense terror, exclaimed in a faint voice, "My God! my God! I am lost."

At a sign from the leader one of his companions bound her securely, and after gagging her fastened her to the foot of the bed. Then, taking Don Tadeo with them, they departed by the same way they had entered. Before he left the room, the chief pinned a piece of parchment to the table with a dagger. Upon this were written a few words:—

"The traitor Pancho Bustamente is cited at the expiration of ninety-three days:

"THE DARK HEARTS."

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE STREET.

As soon as they were outside of the house the masked men dispersed in various directions. When they had disappeared round the corners of the neighbouring streets, the chief turned towards Don Tadeo, who was leaning half-fainting against the wall of the house. A flood of bitter reflections rushed upon his brain; the incidents of that terrible night almost unsettled his reason: in vain he tried to recover the train of his ideas. The stranger looked at him for a few moments with profound attention; then, approaching him, he laid his hand quietly upon his shoulder. At this sudden touch the gentleman started.

"What!" the unknown said, in a tone of reproach, "scarcely entered on the good fight, and you despair already, Don Tadeo?"

The wounded man shook his head.

"You, Don Tadeo, whose lofty brow has never bent before revolutionary storms; you, who in the most trying circumstances have always remained firm, are now pale and cast down through the vain threats of a woman!"

"That woman," he replied mournfully, "has always been my evil genius. She is a demon!"

"And suppose," the unknown exclaimed, "that this woman should succeed in getting up another of the infamous schemes in which her brain is so fertile, a man of heart takes courage in a struggle."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you not understand me? Can you believe that God, who has this night allowed you so miraculously to escape death, has no great designs in store for you? Brother," he added, "the existence that has been restored to you is not your own."

A moment of silence followed this appeal, during which Don Tadeo appeared a prey to profound despair. At length, looking at the unknown, he said with bitter despondency—

"What is to be done? Heaven is my witness that my only desire, my sole happiness, would be to see my country free; but many generations must pass away before the inhabitants of this unfortunate country will be fit to form a people."

"By what right do you presume to fathom the designs of Providence?" the unknown replied. "Do you know what is reserved for you? Who tells you that the passing triumph of our oppressors is not granted in order to render their future fall more terrible?"

"And who are you," said Don Tadeo, "whose voice has stirred the secret fibres of my heart? Who authorises you to speak thus? Who are you?"

"Of what importance is it who I am," the unknown remarked, calmly, "if I succeed in persuading you that all is far from being lost?"

"But still?" the wounded man said, persistently.

"I am he who, a few minutes ago, saved your life. That ought to suffice."

"Not so," Don Tadeo said, warmly, "for you conceal your features under a mask, and the very circumstance you named gives me a right to see them."

"Perhaps it does," the unknown said, slowly removing his mask, and revealing to Don Tadeo a manly marked face, wearing a frank and loyal expression.

"Oh! my heart did not deceive me!" Tadeo cried; "Don Gregorio Peralta!"

"Yes, it is I, Don Tadeo!" the young man replied; "and I cannot comprehend the depression of the man whom the avengers have chosen as their chief."

"How do you know? Notwithstanding our friendship, I have always concealed from you——"

"Were you not condemned to death?" Don Gregorio interrupted. "Your companions elected me King of Darkness in your place, that is, they placed in my hands an immense power. Death unbound the oath of silence imposed upon the brethren. Your name was unknown to all; I was as ignorant that you were the energetic chief who had made our society a power, as you were, my dear friend, that I was one of your soldiers. But, thanks to God, you are saved, Don Tadeo! Resume your place."

Then followed a short silence; the two men appeared to be reflecting deeply. At length Don Tadeo raised his head proudly.

"Thanks, Don Gregorio," he said, in a firm voice, and pressing his hand—"thanks for your rough words; they have restored me to myself. I will prove myself worthy of you. Don Tadeo de Leon no longer exists; the hired assassins of a tyrant have shot him to-night upon the Plaza Mayor. No one is left but the King of Darkness! the implacable leader of the Dark Hearts! We shall triumph, Don Gregorio; for from this day I am no longer a man; I am the avenging sword!"

While uttering these words Don Tadeo had drawn his imposing stature up to its full height.

"Oh," Don Gregorio exclaimed, cheerfully, "I have found my friend again! Thank God! thank God!"

"Yes, my brother," the leader continued, "from this moment the real struggle between us and the tyrant begins—a struggle without pity, without truce, and without mercy, which can only terminate in the complete extinction of our enemies."

"No time is to be lost: let us begone!" Don Gregorio said.

"But whither am I to go?" Don Tadeo asked. "Am I not legally dead. My house is no longer mine."

"That is true," the lieutenant of the Dark Hearts murmured. "Well, never mind that! To-morrow the news of your miraculous resurrection will be a thunder-clap to our enemies! Their awaking will be terrible! They will learn it with stupor."

"And this time, I solemnly swear," Don Tadeo cried, with energy, "the fall of the tyrant alone shall terminate it. But you are right; we cannot remain longer here. Come home with me; unless," he added, with a smile, "you prefer asking an asylum of Dona Rosario?"

Don Tadeo, who had taken Don Gregorio's arm, stopped suddenly at this question. A convulsive shudder darted through his frame, a cold perspiration inundated his face.

"Oh," he exclaimed, in a tone of agony, "my God! I had forgotten!"

Don Gregorio was terrified at the state he beheld him in.

"In Heaven's name, what is the matter?" he asked.

"What is the matter?" the chief replied, "that woman—whom we have weakly failed to crush——"

"Well, what of her?"

"Oh, I have but this moment recollected a horrible threat she made."

"Explain yourself, my friend; you quite terrify me."

"By her orders, Dona Rosario this very night was to be carried off; and who knows if, furious at my escape from her assassins, that woman has not by this time put her to death?"

"Oh, that is frightful!" Don Gregorio cried. "What is to be done?"

"Oh, that woman!" he replied; "and not to be able to act."

"Let us fly to Dona Rosario's residence!" Don Gregorio said.

"Alas! you see I am wounded; I can scarcely support myself."

"Well, when you can no longer walk I will carry you," his friend said, resolutely.

"Thanks, brother! May God help us!"

And the two men, the one leaning upon the other, set off, as fast as the state of Don Tadeo would permit, towards the residence of the lady. But, in spite of the earnest will that animated him, Don Tadeo felt his strength fail him. Whilst labouring on thus the noise of horses' footsteps reached them from a distance. Torches gleamed up the street, and a troop of horsemen appeared.

"Oh, oh!" Don Gregorio said, stopping, and endeavouring to make out who those persons could be, who, in defiance of the police regulations, dared to be passing along the streets at this hour of the night.

"Let us stop," Don Tadeo replied; "I see the glitter of uniforms."

"By Saint Jago!" cried Don Gregorio, "it is General Bustamente himself! The two accomplices are going to have a little chat together."

"Yes," the wounded man said, in a faltering voice; "he is going towards the residence of the linda."

As the horsemen were but at a short distance, the two men, fearing to be surprised, turned quickly into a side street, and the general and his suite passed by.

"Let us begone," Don Gregorio said; and his companion, aware of the urgency for prompt flight, made a desperate effort. They resumed their course, and had walked for about ten minutes, when they heard the steps of more horses.

"What can this mean?" he said; "are all the people of Santiago running about the streets to-night?"

"Hum!" said Don Gregorio, "I will find out this time."

All at once a female voice was heard in a lamentable tone imploring help.

"Make her hold her tongue, *Carajas!*" a man said.

But the sound of that voice had reached the ears of Don Tadeo and his friend. At that voice, which both had recognised, they were roused to feelings of deep interest and anger. They pressed each other's hand firmly; their resolution was formed.

"Hilloah! what is this about?" another individual said, pulling up his horse.

Two men, standing firmly in the middle of the street, seemed determined to bar the passage of the horsemen, of whom there were five. One of them held a woman before him on his horse.

"Hilloah!" cried the one who had just spoken, "get out of the way."

"You shall not pass," a deep voice replied, "unless you release the woman you are bearing off."

"Shan't we?" the horseman remarked, with a laugh.

"Try," said Don Gregorio, cocking his pistol; a movement silently imitated by Don Tadeo.

"For the last time, stand out of the way!" the horseman shouted.

"We will not!"

"We will ride over you, then!"

The five horsemen advanced with uplifted sabres upon the two men, who, firmly fixed in the middle of the street, made no effort to avoid them.

CHAPTER X.

SWORD-THRUSTS.

WE saw in a preceding chapter the two foster-brothers gaily leaving Valparaiso to repair to the capital of Chili, like Bias, carrying all their fortune with them.

After a rather long ride the young men had stopped for the night in a miserable *ranch* constructed of mud and dry branches. The owner of this miserable dwelling, a poor peon, whose life was passed in guarding a few head of lean cattle, gave our travellers a hospitable reception. Quite delighted at having something to offer them, he had cheerfully shared with them his *charqui*—strips of meat, dried in the sun—and his *harina tostada*—roasted corn—the whole washed down with cups of detestable *chicha*.

The Frenchmen, who had been literally dying of hunger, were glad of even these humble viands, however little savoury they might be, and after ascertaining that their horses were comfortably provided for they lay down, wrapped in their ponchos, upon a heap of dry leaves.

At daybreak our two adventurers, still accompanied by their dog Cæsar, who, whatever he might think, expressed no astonishment at this new life, but trotted beside them, saddled their horses, bade farewell to their host, and set forward again, looking with earnest curiosity at every object that presented itself to their view. The life they were beginning, so different from that they had hitherto led, was, for them, full of unexpected charms. Their lungs seemed to expand to inhale the fresh, sharp breeze of the mountains.

It is about thirty-five leagues from Valparaiso to Chili, as the people of the country are accustomed to call the capital. The handsome, broad, and well-kept-up road is rather monotonous, and completely devoid of interest for tourists. Vegetation is rare and poor; while a fine and almost impalpable dust arises with the least puff of wind.

At times may be seen, at an immense height, like a black dot in space, the great condor of Chili, the eagle of the Andes, or the savage vulture in search of prey. At long intervals pass *recuas* of mules, headed by the *yague madrina*, whose sonorous bells are heard to a great distance, accompanying the dismal chant of the muleteer. Or else it is a *huaso* of the interior, hastening to his *chacra* or his *hacienda*, and who, proudly mounted upon a half-wild horse, passes like a whirlwind.

With the exception of what we have described, the road is dull, dusty, and solitary. There is not, as with us, a single hostelry affording accommodation for horse and foot. Nothing! solitude everywhere and always; hunger, thirst, and fatigue must be expected and endured.

But our young men perceived nothing of this. Enthusiasm supplied the place of all they wanted; the road appeared charming to them; the journey they were making delightful! They were in America; beneath their feet was the soil of the New World, that privileged land, of which so many surprising accounts are given; of which so many people talk, and about which so few know anything.

At times travelling at a steady foot pace, at others enjoying a laugh and a gallop, our young men arrived quietly within a league of Santiago, at about eleven o'clock in the evening, just at the moment when the ten Chilean patriots were falling on the Plaza Mayor.

"Let us pull up here," Valentine said cheerfully; "it will give our horses time to breathe."

"Pull up! what for?" Louis asked. "It is late; we shall not find a single hotel open."

"My dear friend," Valentine replied, "you are still a Parisian! You forget that we are in America. In that city, of which the numerous steeples dimly stand out on the horizon before us, everybody is long since asleep."

"What shall we do, then?"

"Pardieu! why bivouac. The night is magnificent; what better could we desire?"

"Oh, nothing, of course!" Louis replied, laughingly.

"Well, then, we have time to chat a little."

"Chat, brother! why, we have done nothing else since morning."

"Pardon me, I don't agree with you. We have talked much, about all sorts of things, but we have not talked in the manner I mean."

"Explain yourself more clearly."

"Look you, brother; an idea has just struck me. We know not what adventures await us in that city, yonder, before us. Well! before we enter it, I should like to have a sort of final conversation with you."

The young men took off their horses' bridles, and, stretching themselves luxuriously upon the ground, they lit their cigars.

"We are in America," Valentine resumed; "in the country of gold, where men of our age can in a few years amass princely fortunes!"

"Do you know, my friend——" interrupted Louis.

"Oh, perfectly!" said Valentine, "you are in love, and you are seeking the object of your love; that's understood; but that does not at all interfere with our projects."

"How is that?"

"Pardieu! that's plain enough. You know, do you not, that Dona Rosario—that's her name, I think—is rich?"

"Probably she may be," the young man said impassionately.

"That's capital! You must understand, then, that when we have found her, you can only demand her hand by producing a fortune equal to her own. Do you understand?"

"The devil! I never thought of that."

"I know you did not; you are in love; and, like all other men afflicted with that disease, you think of nothing but the person you love. I am with you, to think for both."

"But how is fortune to be made so promptly?"

"Ah! ah! you have come to that question at last," Valentine said, laughing.

"I know no profession, Louis continued.

"Nor I either. But let that not alarm you."

"What's to be done?"

"I will think of it; so set your mind at rest. But you must be well convinced of one thing, and that is, that we have set foot in a land where the ideas are quite different from those of the country we have left."

"You mean to say——"

"I mean to say that we must forget all we have learnt, in order that we may make a colossal fortune."

"By honourable means?"

"I am acquainted with no other," Valentine replied. "And remember, brother, that in the country in which we at present are the point of honour is not at all the same as in France, and many things which with us would appear

false coin are here deemed good and passable. You understand me, don't you?"

"Nearly, I think."

"Very well! Imagine we are in an enemy's country."

"But——"

"Do you wish to marry the woman you love?"

"Can you ask me such a question?"

"Allow me to act, then, as I see best! But, above all, when chance throws a good opportunity in our way, let us be careful not to miss it."

"Act just as you please."

"Well, that is all I had to say to you," and, throwing away the remains of his cigar, he rose.

They were soon again in the saddle, and, at a foot's pace, resumed their way towards the city.

Midnight was striking by the clock of the Cabildo at the moment when they entered Santiago by the Canada.

"Everybody is asleep," said Louis.

"So it seems," Valentine replied. "Let us look out, notwithstanding.

At this moment two pistol-shots were heard, mingled with the gallop of horses.

"What can that be?" said Louis. "Assassination is going on here!"

"Forward! *padieu!*" replied Valentine.

They clapped spurs to their horses, and galloped at full speed in the direction whence the sound proceeded. They soon reached a narrow street, in the middle of which two men on foot were contending with five on horseback.

"Have at the horsemen!" Valentine shouted.

"Be of good heart, gentlemen!" said Louis; "help is at hand!"

And timely help it was for Don Gregorio and his friend. A minute later and they must have succumbed. The providential arrival of the Frenchmen quickly changed the appearance of the fight. Two horsemen fell dead from pistol-shots fired by the young men; while a third, knocked down by Don Gregorio, was silently strangled by Cæsar. The other two thought it high time to decamp, leaving their fair prisoner behind them. She had fainted; and Don Tadeo, leaning against the wall of a house, was upon the point of following her example. Valentine secured the horses of the bandits killed in the skirmish.

"Quick, gentlemen! to the saddle!" Valentine said to the Chilians.

Louis had already dismounted, and was attending to the young lady.

"Do not leave us," Don Gregorio remarked.

"Fear nothing!" said Valentine; "we are quite at your service."

"Many thanks! A little assistance, if you please, to place my friend, who is wounded, on horseback."

Once in the saddle, Don Tadeo declared he felt sufficiently strong to keep his seat without help. Don Gregorio placed the still inanimate young lady before him.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "nothing remains for me but to thank you most cordially, if your business will not allow you to remain longer with us."

"I beg to repeat, caballeros, that we are at your service."

"We have no pressing demand upon our time," Louis said, with animation.

"Follow me, then," said Don Gregorio, with a bow; and do not spare the horses; it is an affair of life and death."

And the four horsemen set off as fast as their horses could bear them.

"Eh! eh!" said Valentine. "Here is an adventure that promises something. We are losing no time at Santiago! What think you?"

"We shall see!" Louis replied.

No light had gleamed out, no window had been opened during the combat. The streets remained silent and gloomy; the city seemed abandoned. Nothing was to be heard but the clatter of the horses' feet upon the rough pavement of the streets. The cathedral clock struck two as they passed across the Plaza Mayor.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL BUSTAMENTE.

DON TADEO was right, when, on seeing General Bustamente pass, he said he was on his way to visit his mistress. It was, in fact, to the residence of the *linda* the general was going. On arriving at the gate one of his men dismounted and knocked. But no one answered; and at a sign from the general the soldier knocked louder. But still all remained silent; there was no movement within. He began to be uneasy.

"Oh! oh!" the general said, "what is going on here? Knock again, Diego, and knock in a way to make yourself heard."

The soldier knocked with all his strength, but still uselessly.

"Break open the door!" cried Don Pancho.

The order was instantly obeyed; and the general, followed by his escort, entered the house.

"Be prudent," said the general in a low voice; "place sentinels everywhere, and keep a sharp look-out."

After giving these orders, the general took his pistols from his holsters, and, followed by some of his lancers, entered the house. After passing through several apartments, he arrived at a door, which, being a little ajar; allowed a stream of light to pass. From the other side of this door proceeded something like stifled groans. With a kick of his foot one of the lancers forced open the door; the general entered, and a strange spectacle presented itself to his astonished eyes! Dona Maria, tightly bound and gagged, was fastened to the foot of a damasked bed, saturated with blood. The furniture was broken and disordered, whilst two dead bodies, lying in a pool of blood, made it evident that the room had been the scene of a desperate conflict.

The general ordered the dead bodies to be removed, and then desired to be left alone with the lady. She was senseless.

On turning round to place the pistols he had retained on the table, he drew back with astonishment, and almost terror, as he perceived the dagger standing erect in the middle of it. He went quickly up to the table, seized the dagger, which he carefully drew out, and eagerly took up the paper it had pinned down.

"The tyrant Don Pancho Bustamente is cited at the expiration of ninety-three days!"

"THE DARK HEARTS."

He read this in a loud, harsh tone, and then crushed the paper violently in his hand. "Sangros de Dios! Will these demons always make a mock of me? Oh! they know that I show no mercy, and that those who fall into my hands——"

"Escape!" said a hollow voice, which made him start involuntarily.

He turned sharply round, and beheld the *linda*, with her vicious eye fixed upon him with a demoniacal expression. He sprang towards her.

"Thank God!" he cried warmly, "you are restored to your senses. Are you sufficiently recovered to explain?"

"A terrible scene, Don Pancho!" she replied, in a tremulous voice; "a scene, the bare remembrance of which still freezes me with terror."

"Are you strong enough to describe it to me?"

"I hope so," she replied. "Listen to me attentively, Don Pancho, for what I have to tell concerns you, perhaps, more than me."

"You mean this insolent summons, I suppose?"

She glanced over it, and replied—

"I did not even know that such a paper had been addressed to you. But listen to me attentively."

"In the first place, have the goodness to explain to me what you just now said."

"I will not fail to explain everything, for the vengeance I thirst for must be complete."

"Oh!" he said, a flash of hatred gleaming from his eye, "set your heart at ease on that head."

The linda related to the general what had passed between her and Don Tadeo in the fullest details—how the Dark Hearts had snatched him from her hands, and the threats they had addressed to her on leaving her. She said that her husband, attracted by the hope of avenging himself upon her, whom he suspected of being no stranger to his condemnation, had introduced himself unseen into her house, where by a strange chance she happened to be alone.

The general had not for an instant the idea of doubting the veracity of his mistress. The situation in which he had found her—the incredible news of the resurrection of his most implacable enemy, altogether so confused his thoughts that suspicion had no time to enter his mind. He strode about the room with hasty steps, revolving in his head the most extravagant projects for seizing Don Tadeo, and, above all, for annihilating the Dark Hearts—those never-to-be-caught Proteuses, who so incessantly crossed his path, thwarted all his plans, and always escaped him. The recital made by his mistress had produced the effect of a thunder-clap upon him: he knew not what measures to employ in order to counteract the numerous plots in action against him on all sides simultaneously. The linda did not take her eyes off him for a moment, but watched upon his countenance the various feelings aroused by what she had told him.

General Don Pancho Bustamente, who has left in Chili a reputation for cruelty so terrible that he is generally called the executioner, was a man of thirty-five, although he looked about fifty, a little above the middle height, well made, and of great corporeal strength. His features were tolerably regular, but his prominent forehead, his grey eyes deeply set beneath the brows, and close to his hook nose, his large mouth and high cheek bones, gave him something of a resemblance to a bird of prey. His chin was square, an indication of obstinacy; his hair and moustache, beginning to be streaked with grey, were trained and cut in military fashion. He wore the magnificent uniform, covered at every seam with gold embroidery, of a general officer.

Don Bustamente was the son of his own works, which were in his favour.

At the moment we bring him on the scene he found himself in one of the most critical circumstances of his career. He had in vain shot the patriots *en masse*—conspiracies, as always happens in such cases, succeeded each other without interruption, and the system of terror which he had inaugurated, far from intimidating the population, appeared, on the contrary, to urge them on

to revolt. Secret societies were formed, and one of these, the most powerful and the most terrible, that of the Dark Hearts, enveloped him in invisible nets in which he struggled in vain. After a rather long silence, the general placed himself by the side of the linda.

"We will be avenged!" he said in a deep tone; "but be patient."

"Oh!" she replied, bitterly, "my vengeance has commenced."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I have caused Dona Rosario del Valle, the woman Don Tadeo de Leon loves so passionately, to be carried off."

"You have *done* that?" said the general.

"Yes, and in ten minutes she will be here."

"Oh! oh!" he exclaimed; "and do you mean to keep her here with you?"

"With me;" she cried; "no, I thank you, general. I will make a present of her to the Pehuénchos."

"Oh!" Don Panchito muttered, "women will be always our masters! they alone know how to avenge themselves. But have you no fear lest the man to whom you have confided this mission should betray you?"

She smiled with terrible irony.

"No," she said; "that man hates Don Tadeo more than I do."

At the same instant steps were heard in the chamber preceding the room.

"You will see, general—here is my emissary. Come in!" the linda cried.

A man appeared; his face was pale and haggard; and his clothes stained in various places with blood.

"Well!" she exclaimed, in a tone of intense anxiety.

"All has failed," answered the man.

"What!" the linda shouted, with a cry like that of a wild beast.

"There were five of us," the man continued, quite unmoved, "and we carried off the senorita. All went on well till within a short distance from this house, when we were attacked by four demons."

"And you did not defend yourselves, miserable cowards?" interrupted the general violently.

The bandit gave him a cold look, and continued impassively—

"Three of our number are dead, and the leader and myself wounded."

"And the girl?" the linda asked, passionately.

"The girl was captured by our opponents. The Englishman has sent me to you to learn if you still wish him to carry off Dona Rosario?"

"Would he attempt it again?"

"Yes. And this time, he says, he is certain to succeed if the conditions are the same."

A smile of contempt played round the lips of the courtesan.

"Repeat to him this," she replied, "not only shall he receive the hundred ounces if he succeeds, but, still further, he shall have a hundred more; and that he may be in no doubt of my promise," she added, rising and taking from a drawer a rather heavy bag, "give him this; there is half of the sum, but bid him despatch."

The man bowed.

"As to you, Juanito," she continued, "as soon as you have acquitted yourself of this mission, return."

The bandit disappeared instantly.

"Who is that man?" the general asked.

"A poor devil whom I saved some years ago."

"Hum!" said the general, "he has rather too cunning an eye not to be a rogue."

The linda shrugged her shoulders.

"You are mistrustful of everybody," she said.

"That is the way not to be deceived."

"Or to be deceived the more easily."

"Perhaps so. Well, you see this abduction, so admirably planned, has failed."

"I can only repeat what you yourself said to me just now."

"What is that?"

"Patience! But, pray, what are your present plans?"

"Whilst you are carrying on against our enemies," said the general, in a low, stern voice, "a guerilla warfare of ambuscades and treacheries, I, on my part, will wage an open war against them—a war in the face of the sun. Their blood shall flow in streams over all the territories of the Republic. The Dark Hearts have summoned me in ninety-three days. Well, I take up the gauntlet."

"That is well!" the linda replied. "And now let us arrange our plans. We must come to an end with these miserable plotters, and take proper revenge."

"It shall be a vengeance! I will stake my head on the game. Oh," he added, "I hold them. I have found the means I sought to make them all fall into my hands."

And, having saluted the linda with the greatest courtesy, the general retired.

"I leave you a few soldiers to watch over your safety till the return of your servants," he said.

"Thank you, thank you," she replied.

The linda, when left alone, instead of seeking the repose so necessary after the excitement of the night, remained plunged in deep thought. Suddenly she sprang up, and passing her hand rapidly over her brow, as if to efface its wrinkles, she cried, in a tone of triumph—

"And I, too, will succeed!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPY.

WHEN the young lady was delivered, the four men set off as fast as they could go. In ten minutes they were out of the city, and with the change of the road their speed increased.

"Eh, eh!" Valentine said, laughing, to his foster-brother; "we seem to be playing at prisoners' base. We enter the city by one gate, to leave it immediately by another."

With the exception of these few words, to which Louis only replied by a shrug of the shoulders, no other conversation took place during the hour which their rapid journey lasted. By the pale light of the moon the trees on each side of the road seemed to defile like a legion of melancholy phantoms. Ere long the white walls of a farmhouse stood out upon the horizon.

"Here we are," said Don Gregorio.

They reached the house in a few minutes. The gate was open, but a man was standing evidently on the watch. The fugitives dashed like a hurricane into the patio, and the gates were immediately closed behind them.

"What has happened, Tio Pepito?" Don Gregorio asked of the man who appeared to have expected him.

"Nothing, mi amo, nothing of consequence," replied Tio Pepito, a little, thick-set man with a round face, lit up by two sparkling grey eyes.

"Have not the persons I expected arrived?"

"Pardon me, mi amo. They have been at the chacra more than an hour."

"That's well. Announce my arrival, and tell them I shall be at their service in two minutes."

The mayoral, for this man was the major-domo of the chacra, entered the house without reply. Don Tadeo, also, who seemed to know perfectly well where he was, disappeared, bearing the young girl in his arms. The two Frenchmen were left alone with the chacrero.

"Now that you are, for the present at least, in safety, sir," said Valentine, "we have only to take our leave."

"Not so!" Don Gregorio exclaimed; "it must not be so. Diable!" he added, smiling; "chance does not so often procure us such friends as you, to allow us to part with you thus when we have met you. You will remain here, if you please."

"If our continuing here can be of any service to you," Louis replied, "we are at your command."

"Thank you," he said, and pressing their hands warmly; "I shall never forget that I owe to you the lives of myself and my friend. Can I be of any service to you?"

"Well," Valentine said, laughing, "it may happen so, caballero."

"Explain yourself," Don Gregorio replied.

"Dame! it is clear enough; we are strangers."

"When did you arrive?" the Chilian said, examining them attentively.

"Faith! very recently. You are the first persons we have spoken to."

"That is well," Gregorio said, slowly. "I told you that I was at your service, did I not?"

"Yes, and we sincerely thank you; although we hope never to be obliged to remind you of this offer."

"I perfectly appreciate your delicacy; but a service like the one you have rendered me and my friend is an eternal bond. Take no heed of your future fortune."

"Pardon me, pardon me!" said Valentine, earnestly; "we do not understand one another at all; you mistake us. We are not the men who expect to be paid for having acted as our hearts dictated. You owe us nothing."

"I do not propose or pretend to pay you, gentlemen. I only wish, in order to attach you to me, to propose to you to share my good or evil fortune."

"In that case we at once accede," said Louis, "and will endeavour to prove ourselves worthy."

"I have no doubt you will. Only I beg you not to be misled; the life I am leading is full of perils."

"I can suppose that," said Valentine, with a laugh. "The scene at which we have been present makes it pretty evident that your existence is not one of the most peaceful nature."

"Do you know nobody in this country?"

"Nobody."

"Your political opinions, then, are unformed."

"As regards Chili, completely."

"Bravo!" Don Gregorio exclaimed; "if we agree on that point our compact will be for life and death."

"We do agree," said Valentine, laughing; "and if you conspire——"

"Well?" the Chilian asked, fixing an inquiring look upon him.

"Why, we will conspire, too, pardieu!"

The three men exchanged a cordial pressure of the hand, and then Don Gregorio called the major-domo to conduct them to their chamber.

"Good night! or rather good morning!" he said, on quitting them.

"Come," said Valentine, rubbing his hands, "matters are going on well."

"Hum!" Louis replied, with a tone of something like uneasiness; "conspire!"

"And what better?" said Valentine. "Remember, my friend, that the best fishing is in troubled waters."

"In that case," Louis remarked, taking up the gay humour of his companion, "if my presentiments are just, ours will be miraculous."

"I expect so," said Valentine, firmly.

The chamber in which the young men found themselves was whitewashed, and entirely destitute of furniture, with the exception of two oak frames furnished with dressed hides, which served as beds, a massive table with twisted feet, and four seats.

"Eh!" said Louis, "our friends, the Chilians, do not seem to consult comfort much."

"Bah!" Valentine replied, "we have all that we require. A man can sleep soundly anywhere when he is fatigued."

"You are right. Let us take a little rest then, for we don't know what to-morrow has in reserve for us."

In a quarter of an hour they were both fast asleep. At the moment the Frenchmen went into the house with the major-domo, Don Tadeo came out by another door.

"Well?" Don Gregorio asked, anxiously.

"She is asleep. Her terror has abated," Don Tadeo replied. "The joy she experienced at seeing me, whom she believed dead, brought about a very salutary crisis."

"I am glad to hear it. In that quarter, then, we may be at ease?"

"Completely."

"Do you feel yourself strong enough to be present at an important interview?"

"Is it necessary that I should be present?"

"I think it quite right that you should hear the communications of my emissaries."

"It is very imprudent of you," said Don Tadeo, "to receive such a man in your own house!"

"Oh! do not alarm yourself! I have known him for a long time. Besides, he is not aware whose house he is in; he was brought hither blind-folded."

"Well! since you desire it, I am at your commands."

The two friends, after having covered their faces with black velvet masks, entered the apartment in which were the persons who waited for them. This apartment, which served as a dining-room, was very large, and furnished with a very long table. Three men, wrapped in variegated ponchos, and with broad-brimmed hats pulled down over their eyes, were carelessly smoking their slender papelitos, whilst warming themselves round a copper brasero.

"Why," asked Don Tadeo, who at the first glance recognised the emissary, "why did you not wait, Don Pedro, for the meeting to-morrow at the Quinta Verde?"

The man thus named as Don Pedro bowed respectfully. He was an

individual of about thirty years of age. He was tall, and his countenance, as sharp as a blade of a knife, wore a cunning, roguish expression.

"What I have to state only indirectly concerns the Dark Hearts," he said.

"Then, of what importance is it to us?" Don Gregorio interrupted him.

"But it greatly concerns the leaders, particularly the King of Darkness."

"Explain yourself, then, for he is before you," Don Tadeo remarked, taking a step forward.

Pedro darted a look at him which seemed to endeavour to penetrate through the tissue of his mask.

"What I have to say will be brief," he replied. "General Don Bustamente will be present at the meeting to-morrow."

"Are you sure of that?" the two conspirators exclaimed.

"I persuaded him to do so."

"Are you ignorant, then," Don Tadeo exclaimed with great warmth, "in what manner we punish traitors?"

"I am no traitor; on the contrary, I deliver into your hands your most implacable enemy."

Don Tadeo replied only by a suspicious glance.

"The general then is ignorant?"

"Of everything," said Don Pedro.

"With what purpose, then, does he wish to introduce himself among us?"

"Can you not guess? For that of obtaining your secret."

"But he risks his life."

"Do you forget that every adept must be introduced by a sponsor, who alone knows him? No one sees his face. Well, I introduce him," he added.

"That is true. But if he should suspect you?"

"I must undergo the consequences; but he will not suspect me?"

"Why not?" Don Gregorio asked.

"Because," the spy replied, "for ten years the general has employed me, and during those ten years he has had only cause to praise me."

A momentary silence followed.

"Here!" said Don Gregorio, "this time it is not ten ounces, but twenty, that you have earned."

And he placed a heavy purse in his hands. The spy seized it with a gesture of avidity, and concealed it quickly under his poncho.

"You shall have no reproach to make me."

"I hope we shall not," said Don Tadeo. "Only remember, we should be merciless."

"I know it."

"In that case, farewell."

"Farewell till to-morrow."

The men who had brought him, and who during the conversation had remained motionless, at a sign from Don Gregorio approached the spy, bandaged his eyes again, and led him away.

"Is that fellow a traitor?" asked Don Gregorio.

"It is our duty to suppose him one," the King of Darkness replied gravely.

The two friends, instead of seeking the repose which must have been so necessary to them, talked together for a long time. In the meantime Don Pedro had been quickly led back to Santiago. On arriving at one of the gates, his guides left him. As soon as he was alone, he removed the handkerchief from his eyes.

"Hum!" he said, with a bitter smile, as he tossed up in his right hand the purse Don Gregorio had given him. "Twenty ounces make a purse of gold."

Now let us see if General Bustamente is as liberal as his enemies. By the Virgin! the news I carry him are worth something to him."

After having cast his eyes around to see if the coast was clear, he set off at a sharp trot towards the government palace, muttering to himself—

"Bah! times are hard. If a man did not manœuvre a little, he would find no means of bringing up his family honestly."

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE.

ON the morrow the two Frenchmen, perfectly recovered from their fatigue, sprang cheerfully from their humble beds, and dressed themselves in haste.

The chacra, of which they had only a glimpse the night before by moonlight, was an immense farm, consisting of extensive buildings, and surrounded by fields in full cultivation. The greatest animation prevailed everywhere. Peons, mounted on half-wild horses, were driving out the cattle to the artificial meadows, whilst others were running about after the horses they were getting together, in order to lead them to the drinking-place. In the patio the majordomo was overlooking the women and girls engaged in milking. In short, this residence, which had appeared to them so silent and dismal the night before, assumed by daylight an appearance of life and cheerfulness delightful to contemplate.

The cries of the peons mingled with the lowing of the cattle, the barking of the dogs, and the crowing of the cocks, had formed that melodious concert which is only to be heard on a farm, and which always rejoices the heart.

Behind the chacra extended a well kept-up garden, in which oranges, pomegranates, and citrons, planted in the open ground, grew amidst limes, apples, plums, and all the other fruits of Europe. Louis was agreeably surprised at the aspect of this garden. Whilst Valentine went, followed by Cæsar, to look at the operations of the peons and smoke his cigar in the patio, Louis felt himself led by his dreamy spirit to indulge in poetical reveries, and to seek a few minutes' solitude in this Eden.

Urged by an unknown power, intoxicated by the sweet odours which embalmed the atmosphere, he glided into the garden.

The young man went dreaming along the garden walks, mechanically pulling to pieces with his fingers a rose which he had gathered. He had walked thus for nearly an hour, when he was roused by a slight noise among the leaves at a short distance from him. He instinctively raised his head, just in time to catch a glimpse of a light white robe which was disappearing among the trees. At the sight of this mysterious apparition the young man felt his heart bound in his breast; he stopped trembling.

"What can be the matter with me?" he murmured to himself. "I am mad!" he continued, with a forced smile. "I think I see her everywhere. Heavens! I love her so deeply that, in spite of myself, my imagination brings her before me unceasingly. That girl, of whom I just caught a glimpse, is probably the same we last night so miraculously saved. Poor child! Fortunately she did not see me; I should have frightened her."

And, as always happens in such cases, he set off, on the contrary, in the very footsteps of her he had only caught a glimpse of, but whom he had nevertheless recognised.

The young girl, reclining in the depths of an arbour, like a humming-bird in its bed of moss, with a pale face, and her eyes cast down to the earth, was listening, pensive and sad, to the joyous melodies which the birds chanted in her absent ear. All at once, a slight noise made her start and raise her head.

"Don Louis!" she exclaimed.

She had recognised him. The young man sank on his knees at the entrance of the arbour.

"Oh!" he cried, in a voice trembling with emotion; "for pity's sake, remain, madam!"

"Don Louis!" she repeated, already recovered, and feigning the most perfect indifference. Young girls, even the purest, possess in a high degree the talent of concealing their feelings.

"Yes, it is I, madam," he continued; "I, who, to see you again, have abandoned everything!"

The young lady displayed some slight surprise.

"For Heaven's sake!" he resumed, "allow me once more, if but for an instant, to contemplate your adored features! Oh!" he added, "my heart had told me you were here before my eyes perceived you."

"Caballero," she said, in a tremulous voice, "I do not understand you."

"Oh, fear nothing from me, madam!" he interrupted her vehemently; "my respect for you is profound."

"Pray, caballero," she said, earnestly, "rise; if any one should surprise you thus!"

"Madam," he replied, "the avowal I have to make to you requires me to remain in the position of a suppliant!"

"Oh, caballero!"

"I love you, madam!" he said, in broken accents; "I know not what gives me the boldness to pronounce a word which in France I did not venture to breathe in your ear. Even if you banished me from your presence for ever, once again I must tell you that I love you, and if you do not return my love I shall die!"

The maiden looked at him for a moment with a melancholy air; she took a step towards him, and held out her hand, upon which he imprinted a burning kiss.

"Rise!" she said.

The count obeyed. Dona Rosario sunk back upon the bench behind her.

"Caballero," she said, in a melancholy tone, "if God has permitted us to meet once again, it is because, in His divine goodness, He has judged that a decisive explanation should take place between us."

The young man appeared anxious to speak.

"Do not interrupt me," she continued, "or I shall not have the courage to finish what I have to say to you. You love me, and yet how many times, during my short residence in France, have you cursed me in secret, accusing me of coquetry, or, at least, of unaccountable levity!"

"Madam!"

"Oh!" she said, with a faint smile, "since you have avowed your love for me, I will be frank with you, Louis; and although it may be my duty to deprive you of all future hope, I am at least anxious to justify the past."

"Oh, madam! why do you repeat such things to me?"

"Why?" she said, with a look full of melancholy, "because I have faith in that love, so warm, so young, so true—because, in short, I also love you!"

On hearing this confession, so ingenuous, and made in a tone so sorrowful that the young girl appeared no longer to belong to earth, the count felt struck by a terrible presentiment. Trembling, bewildered, he gazed on her with the fixed and desperate eye of one condemned to death.

"Yes!" she resumed, with feverish eagerness; "yes, I love you; but never, never can we be united."

"Oh, that is impossible!" he cried.

"Listen to me," she said. "I do not order you to forget me, Louis; a love like yours is eternal. Alas! I feel that mine will last as long as my life. But this love, which would be for us the height of felicity—blend with each other to form one blissful whole—this boundless happiness must be dispersed for ever."

"Oh, I cannot consent!" he exclaimed, in a voice broken by sobs.

"But it must be so!" she continued, wild with anguish. "Great Heaven! what more do you require of me? Must I confess everything to you? Well, then, since it must be so, know that I am a miserable creature, condemned from my birth, pursued by a terrible hatred, which follows me step by step, which watches me incessantly, and some day—to-morrow, perhaps to-day—will crush me without mercy!"

"But I will defend you!" the young man said.

"And I, on my part, am not willing that you should die!" she replied. "To attach yourself to me is to court destruction. I went to France to seek refuge. I was obliged to quit that hospitable land. Arrived here only a few weeks since, but for you, last night, I should have been lost. No no, I am condemned; I know I am, and I am resigned; but I will not drag you down in my fall. Alas! I am, perhaps, doomed to suffer tortures still more horrible than those I have hitherto endure!"

At this moment Valentine's voice was heard at a short distance, and Caesar came wagging his tail to his master. Dona Rosario gathered a blossom of the *suchil*.

"Here," she said, "my friend accept this flower, the only memorial that will remain with you of me."

The young man concealed the flower in his bosom.

"Some one is coming," she continued. "Swear Louis! swear to quit this country as soon as possible."

The count hesitated.

"Oh!" he cried, "some day, perhaps——"

"Never on earth. Have I not told you that I am condemned? Swear, Louis!"

She pronounced these words with such a tone of despair that the young man was overcome.

"I swear to do so?" he said.

"Thanks! thanks!" she cried wildly, and hurriedly imprinting a kiss upon the brow of her prostrated lover, she disappeared with the lightness of a fawn.

"Why, brother," said Valentine gaily, "what the deuce are you about here, at the bottom of the garden? Breakfast is waiting for you."

The count turned towards him, his face bathed in tears, and threw his arms round his neck.

"Brother! brother!" he cried, in an accent of despair, "I am the most unhappy of men!"

Valentine looked at him in astonishment. The count had fainted.

"What on earth is all this about?" said the soldier, laying his foster-brother gently upon a grassy bank.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE QUINTA VERDE.

Not far from Rio Claro, a charming little city, built in a delicious situation between Santiago and Talca, there was upon a hill commanding an extensive view a pretty *quinta*, with white walls and green shutters, coquettishly concealed from indiscreet eyes by a thicket of trees of various sorts—oaks, acajous, maples, palms, aloes, cactus, &c., which sprang up and intertwined within each other in such a fashion around it as to form an almost impregnable rampart. This habitation was named the Quinta Verde.

By what prodigy had this house, so simple in appearance and so like the rest, avoided the common fate, and remained alone, perhaps, of all the houses of the Chilian plains, calm and tranquil in the midst of general confusion, equally respected by the two parties contending for power, and surveying carelessly from the top of its pretty mirador the revolution raging at its feet, which carried away, as in an infernal whirlwind, cities, villages, houses, fortunes, and families?

The day after that on which the events occurred which open this history the heat had been oppressive, the atmosphere heavy, and the sun had gone down amidst a flood of purple vapour, the precursors of a storm which burst with fury as soon as night had completely closed in. The wind bent down the trees as it whistled through them, the collision of the branches producing a melancholy sound; the heavens were black, not a star was to be seen; and large grey clouds coursed rapidly across the zenith, covering all nature with a leaden pall.

Nine o'clock struck slowly from a distant steeple. The moon, fitfully emerging from behind the clouds which veiled her, spread for a few seconds a pale and trembling light over the scene, giving it a fantastic aspect. This fugitive ray of doubtful light, nevertheless, enabled a small troop of horsemen, who were painfully ascending a winding path on the side of a mountain, to distinguish, at a few paces before them, the black outline of a house, from the top window of which beamed like a pharos a red, uncertain light. This house was the Quinta Verde.

At about four or five paces in advance of the troop rode two horsemen, muffled carefully in their cloaks; the flaps of their hats pulled down over their eyes appeared in the darkness to be a needless precaution.

"Heaven be praised!" said one of these horsemen to his companion, "I hope we shall soon be there."

"In a quarter of an hour, at latest, general."

"Do not let us stop, then," the one addressed as general said; "I am impatient to penetrate into this abominable den."

"One moment, general," the first speaker continued. "It is my duty to warn your excellency that there is still time to retreat."

"Please to observe this, Diego," said the general, "in the circumstances in which I am placed, prudence, as you understand the word, would be cowardice. I am quite aware what I am called upon to do by the confidence placed in me by my fellow-citizens; our position is most critical. The news of Don Tadeo's escape from death has spread with the rapidity of a train of gunpowder; all the malcontents of whom he is the leader are in almost open action; if I were to hesitate to strike a great blow, it would to-morrow, perhaps, be too late."

"And yet, general, if the man who has furnished you with this information should——"

"Be a traitor? Well, that is possible—ay, even probable; therefore, I have neglected nothing that may neutralise the consequences of treachery."

"By the Virgin, general, in your place, however——"

"Thank you, old comrade, thank you for your solicitude; but enough of this subject."

"I have nothing more to do, then, but to wish your excellency well through your undertaking, for you know you must arrive alone at the Quinta Verde."

"Very well, wait here then; make your men dismount for a time, and keep a sharp watch."

Diego bowed respectfully, but with an air of anxiety, and withdrew his hand, which had been placed on the bridle of the general's horse. The latter more carefully enveloped himself in his cloak, the folds of which had become too loose, and gave the usual jockey signal to excite his horse.

After a few minutes the general stopped; but it appeared as if his journey was completed, for, dismounting, he threw the bridle on his horse's neck, with as little care what became of it as if it had been a hack post-horse, and walked with a firm step towards the house, and from which he was not now more than ten paces distant. When he reached the gate, he stood for a second and looked around him, as if endeavouring to penetrate the darkness. In spite of himself the general was seized with that vague fear which takes possession of the most courageous man when in face of the unknown.

"What the devil! am I afraid?" he murmured, with an ironical smile, and going boldly up to the gate he knocked three times at equal intervals. In an instant his arms were seized by invisible hands, a bandage was placed over his eyes, and a voice murmured in his ear—

"Make no resistance, twenty poniards are at your breast; at the first cry, at the least opposition, you are a dead man. Reply categorically to our questions."

"All these threats are needless," the general replied in a calm voice; "as I came here of my own free will, I can have no intention of resisting."

"What do you come to seek here?" the voice said.

"The Dark Hearts."

"Are you ready to appear in their presence?"

"I am," the general replied, still impassive.

"Do you dread nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Let your sword fall."

The general quitted his hold of his sword.

"Now, step forward without fear," said the voice.

The prisoner found himself instantly at liberty.

"In the name of Christ, who died upon the cross for the salvation of the world, Dark Hearts, receive me among the number of your brethren," the general then said, in a low and firm voice.

The double gates of the Quinta Verde flew open before him, and two masked men, each holding a dark lantern in his hand, the focus of which he directed on the stranger's face, appeared in the entrance.

"There is still time," said one of the unknown; "if your heart be not firm you may retreat."

"My heart is firm."

"Come on, then, as you think yourself worthy to share our glorious task," said the masked man, in a deep, sonorous voice.

The general felt a cold shudder run through his limbs; but he quickly surmounted this involuntary emotion.

"It is for traitors to tremble," he replied; "for my part I have nothing to fear."

And he boldly stepped into the Quinta Verde, the doors of which closed after him with a dull, heavy sound. The bandage which covered his eyes, and which had prevented those who had interrogated him from recognising him, notwithstanding their efforts to do so, was then removed. After proceeding for more than a quarter of an hour along a circular corridor, lighted only by the red flickering flame of the torch carried by the guide through this labyrinth, the general was suddenly stopped by a door in front of him. He turned hesitatingly towards the masked men, who had followed him step by step.

"What do you wait for?" said one. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

The general bowed in sign of acquiescence, and knocked loudly at the door. The folding panels drew back silently into the wall, and the general found himself at the entrance of a vast hall, whose walls were covered with long red draperies, gloomily lighted by a bronze lamp and several chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, which shone in an uncertain manner upon the countenances of about a hundred men, who, with naked swords in their hands, fixed their eyes upon him through the black masks which concealed their faces. At the bottom of this hall was a table covered with a green cloth, at which were seated three masked men. As a further precaution, before each of them a lighted torch was planted on the table, the dazzling flame of which allowed them to be but vaguely seen.

The general manifested no emotion at this imposing *mise en scene*. A smile of disdain curled his lip, and he stepped boldly forward. At this moment he felt a light touch on the shoulder, and, on turning round, perceived that one of the guides was holding out a mask to him. In spite of the precautions he had taken to disguise his features, he eagerly seized it and placed it on his face.

"In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti!" he said.

"Amen," all present replied, in a sepulchral tone.

"Exaudiat te Dominus, in die Tribulationis," said one.

"Impleat Dominus omnes petitiones tuas," the general replied, without hesitation.

"La patria?" the first speaker rejoined.

"O la Muerte!" replied the general.

"What is your purpose in coming here?"

"I wish to be admitted into the bosom of the elect."

There was a momentary silence.

"Is there any one among us who can or will answer for you?" the masked man then asked.

"I cannot say; for I do not know the persons among whom I find myself."

"How do you know that?"

"I suppose so, as they, as well as I, are masked."

"The Dark Hearts," said the interrogator, in a deep tone, "consider not the countenance, they search souls."

The general bowed. The interrogator continued—

"Do you know the conditions of your affiliation?"

"I know them."

"What are they?"

"To sacrifice mother, father, brothers, relations, friends to the cause which I swear to defend."

"What next?"

"At the first signal, whether it be by day or night, even at the foot of the altar, in whatever circumstances I may be placed, to quit everything, in order to accomplish immediately the orders that shall be given me."

"Do you subscribe to these conditions?"

"I subscribe to them."

"Are you prepared to swear to submit yourself to them?"

"I am prepared."

"Repeat, then, after me, with your hand upon the Gospels, the words I am about to dictate to you."

"Dictate!"

The three men behind the table rose; a Bible was brought, and the general resolutely placed his hand upon the book. A slight murmur ran through the ranks of the assembly. The president struck the table with the hilt of his dagger, and silence was re-established. This man then repeated in a slow and deep-toned voice the oath, which the general pronounced after him.

"So far well!" replied the president. "You are now our brother."

He then rose, and stepping across the hall, stood full in front of the general.

"Now," he said, in a solemn threatening voice, "answer me, Don Pancho Bustamente. As you, of your own free will, take a false oath before a hundred persons, do you think we should commit a crime in condemning you?"

In spite of his assurance, the general could not repress a start of terror.

"Remove the mask which covers this man's face, so that every one may know it is he! Ah! general, you have entered the lion's den."

The noise of a distant commotion was heard.

"Your soldiers are coming to your rescue," the president resumed, "but they will come too late, general; prepare to die."

These words fell like the blow of a mace upon the brow of him who found himself thus outwitted.

"By what right," he said haughtily, "do you constitute yourselves judges and executioners?"

"You are one of us, and are bound by our sentence," the president replied, with an ironical smile.

"Beware of what you are about to do, gentlemen," the general said, in a haughty tone; "remember I am minister-at-war!"

"And I am King of Darkness," the president cried, in a voice that froze the very blood of the general. "Brethren, what chastisement does this man deserve?"

"Death!" the conspirators replied

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEPARTURE.

SERGEANT DIEGO, when left by General Bustamente, was very uneasy regarding the fate of his leader. He was an old soldier, and well acquainted with all the machinations practised in this country between inveterate enemies. He had been far from approving of the general's undertaking. Constrained, ostensibly, to obey the order he had received, he had resolved *in petto*, not to leave his order without help in this wasps' nest. Diego entertained for General Bustamente, under whose orders he had served ten years, a profound regard. He immediately placed himself in relation with two other officers of the detachment, ordered like him-

self to watch the mysterious house. He was walking about, biting his moustache, and swearing to himself, determined if the general did not come out within half an hour, to obtain an entrance by force, when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned sharply round, stopping short in an oath that was passing his lips, and saw a man standing before him.

"Is that you?" Don Pedro.

"Myself," the spy replied.

"But where the devil do you come from?"

"No matter; do you wish to save the general, who is in danger of death?"

"Demonios!" the sergeant shouted; "he must be saved."

"For that purpose I am here; don't speak so loud, but listen. A detachment must feign an attack upon the gate by which the general entered; another will watch the environs, for the Dark Hearts have roads known only to themselves; you, with a third detachment, will follow me; I will undertake to introduce you into the house—is that agreed upon?"

"Perfectly."

"Make haste, then, to inform your colleagues."

"Instantly; where shall I find you again?"

"Here."

"Very well; I only ask five minutes," he said.

"Hum!" thought Don Pedro, as soon as he was alone; "we should be prudent when we wish affairs to be profitable."

"Well!" he said, as he saw Diego coming towards him.

"Everything is done," replied the sergeant.

"Come on, then, and God grant it may not be too late!"

Everything was done as had been arranged; whilst one detachment vigorously attacked the gate of the Quinta Verde, Don Pedro led the troops commanded by Diego to the opposite side of the house, where a low window was open; this window was grated, but several bars had been removed beforehand, which left the entrance easy. At the end of a few minutes they came to a closed door.

"This is it," said Pedro, in a low voice.

At a sign from the sergeant the door was beaten in, and the soldiers rushed into the room. It was nearly empty, its only occupant being a man stretched motionless upon the floor. The sergeant sprang towards him—he had recognised his leader—General Bustamente lay with a dagger sticking upright in his breast. To the hilt of the dagger was tied a long black strip, upon which were written these words in red ink—

"The justice of the Dark Hearts."

"Oh," cried Diego, "vengeance! vengeance!"

"Vengeance!" the soldiers repeated.

The sergeant turned round towards Pedro, whom he believed to be still by his side; but the spy, who alone could guide them in their researches, had thought it prudent to steal away.

"No matter," said Diego. "If I demolish this den of assassins from bottom to top, and don't leave stone upon stone, I swear I will find these demons."

The old soldier began searching in all directions, whilst a surgeon who had followed the detachment paid attention to the wounded man.

The Dark Hearts, as the spy had truly said, had paths known only to themselves, by which they had quietly departed, after having accomplished their terrible vengeance, or executed their severe justice, according to the point of view in which an act of this nature and importance is viewed.

Don Tadeo and Don Gregorio returned together to the chacra, and were astonished on their arrival to find Valentine, whom they supposed to be in bed

and asleep long before, waiting for them at that late hour, to request a few minutes conversation. The conversation was long—so long that we think it useless to repeat it here in detail, but will satisfy our ourselves with giving our readers the end of it, which sums it up perfectly.

"I will not insist," said Don Tadeo, "although you will not tell us your motives. I believe you to be too considerate a man, Don Valentine, not to be convinced that the reasons which force you to leave us are serious."

"Of the greatest seriousness," the young man replied.

"Very well. But on leaving this place, in which direction do you intend to bend your steps?"

"Faith! I own frankly that all directions are the same to us, since we must depend upon chance."

"I am of your opinion," replied Don Tadeo, smiling. "Listen to me, then. I possess large estates in the province of Valdivia. What prevents you going that way in preference to any other?"

"Nothing, that I know of."

"I at this moment stand in need of a man whom I can depend upon to undertake an important mission to one of the principal chiefs. If you are going to the province of Valdivia you will be obliged to traverse Araucania in its whole length. Are you willing to undertake this commission?"

"Why should I not?" said Valentine. "I have never come face to face with savages."

"Very well; now is your opportunity. That is agreed then. You wish to start to-morrow."

"To-morrow! to-day, if you please—in a few hours."

"Very well, then; at the moment of your departure my major-domo shall place, on my part, written instructions in your hands."

"Caramba!" said Valentine, laughing; "here am I transformed into an ambassador."

"Do not joke, my friend," said Don Tadeo. "The mission I confide to you is delicate—dangerous even. If the papers of which you will be the bearer are found upon you, you will be exposed to great dangers."

"Pardieu! Wherever there is danger there is pleasure. And what is the name of the person to whom I am to remit these despatches?"

"They are of two descriptions. The latter only concerns yourself: during the course of your journey you can make yourself acquainted with them; they will instruct you in certain matters you should know."

"I understand—and the others?"

"The others are for Tiger Sun."

"A queer name that," Valentine replied, with a laugh. "And where am I to find that?"

"By my faith, my friend," replied Don Tadeo, "I know no more than you do."

"The Araucano Indians," interrupted Don Gregorio, "are a rather wandering race."

"Bah! I shall find him, be assured of that."

"We do entirely rely upon you."

"In a few hours, as I have told you, I shall myself set out to place in a convent the young lady whom you so fortunately saved. In Valdivia I shall await your answer."

"I beg your pardon, but I have not the least idea where Valdivia is," observed Valentine.

"Don't be uneasy on that account; any child in this country can direct you," Don Gregorio replied.

"Thanks."

"And now, if you change your mind when we meet again, and consent to remain among us, remember we are brothers."

"I can neither reply yes or no, sir, as yet."

After exchanging a few more words, the three men separated. At sunrise, Louis and Valentine, mounted on magnificent horses, which Don Tadeo had forced them to accept, rode away, followed by Cæsar. Valentine had received his despatches. As they were quitting the farm Louis turned round instinctively, as if to salute with a last look a spot he abandoned for ever, and which contained all that was dear to him. A window was gently opened, and the face of the fair girl appeared through the small interval, bathed in tears.

"Adieu! oh, adieu for ever!" murmured Louis, choking with emotion.

"Ah, perhaps," said Valentine.

Within four hours from their departure Don Tadeo and Don Gregorio likewise set out on their journey to Valdivia.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MEETING.

As the principal incidents of this history are now about to take place in Araucania we think it necessary to give our readers some account of this people. The Araucanos or Moluchos inhabit the beautiful country situated between the rivers Biobio and Valdivia, having on one side the sea and on the other the Andes. They are thus completely enclosed within the Chilian republic, and yet have always remained independent. It would be a great error to suppose them savages. The Araucanos have adopted as much of European civilisation as suited their character and their mode of living. From the most remote times their people have formed a national body, strong and compact, governed by wise laws. The first Spanish conquerors were quite astonished to find in this remote corner of America a powerful aristocratic republic.

The Carampangue—in the Araucano idiom, refuge of lions—is a charming stream, half torrent, half river, which comes bounding down from the inaccessible summits of the Andes, and, after many capricious windings, loses itself in the sea two leagues to the north of Arauco. Nothing can be more beautiful than the banks of the Carampangue, bordered by smiling valleys, covered with woods, with apple-trees loaded with fruit, rich pastures in which animals of all kinds range and feed at liberty, and high mountains, from the verdant sides of which hang, in the most picturesque positions, clusters of cabins, whose white-washed walls shine in the sun, and give life to this enchanting landscape.

On the day when we resume our narrative, that is, on a beautiful morning in July—called by the Indians the month of the sun—two horsemen, followed by a magnificent black-and-white Newfoundland dog, were ascending at a sharp trot the course of the river, following what is called a wild-beast's track, scarcely marked in the high grass. These men, dressed in the Chilian costume, surging up suddenly amidst this wild natural scene, formed by their manners and their vestments a contrast with everything which surrounded them, a contrast of which they probably had no idea. These two men were the Count Louis de Prebois-Crance and Valentine Guillois, his foster-brother.

The young men had passed the night in an abandoned rancho which they had

fallen in with on their way, and at sunrise resumed their journey; so that they now began to be sensible of the calls of hunger. Upon taking a survey of the spot where they found themselves, they perceived a clump of apple-trees, which intercepted the rays of the sun, and offered them a shelter for their repast and a little rest. They dismounted and sat down at the foot of a large apple-tree, leaving their horses to browse upon the young branches so abundant around them. Valentine knocked down a few apples with a stick, opened his alforjas—large cloth pockets placed behind the saddle—drew out some sea biscuit, a piece of bacon, and a goat's-milk cheese, and the two young men began eating gaily, sharing their provisions with Cæsar in a brotherly way.

"Caramba!" said Valentine, "it is comfortable to have a little rest after having been on horseback from four o'clock."

"Well, to tell the truth, I must own I am a little fatigued," Louis confessed.

"My poor friend, you are not, as I am, accustomed to long journeys."

"Bah! on the contrary, I am getting accustomed to them very well; and besides," he added with a sigh, "physical fatigue makes me forget——"

"Ah! that's true," Valentine interrupted; "I see you are becoming a man."

"No," said Louis, "you are mistaken, I endeavour to play a manly part."

"Yes, hope is one of the supreme illusions of love; when it can no longer exist, love dies."

"Or he who experiences it," said the young man.

"What a charming country," cried Valentine, with feigned enthusiasm, for the purpose of giving the conversation another direction, as he swallowed with delectation an enormous piece of bacon.

"Yes, but the roads are very bad."

"Who knows?" said Valentine, with a smile; "they say the roads to Paradise are of that kind. And you, Cæsar, what do you think of our journey, old boy?"

The dog wagged his tail, fixing his eyes, sparkling with intelligence, upon the speaker's face, whilst he eagerly devoured all that was given to him. But he stopped suddenly in his masticating operations, and barked furiously.

"Silence, Cæsar," said Valentine; "what do you bark in that manner for? You know right well we are in a desert, and that in a desert there is nobody but the devil!"

But Cæsar continued to bark.

"Hum!" said Louis, "I do not agree with you; I think that the deserts of America are thickly peopled."

"Well, perhaps you are right."

"The dog's barking is not usual."

"I will see," said Valentine, and addressing the Newfoundland. "Come, come! hold your tongue, Cæsar, you are tiresome!"

Here he rose, and cast an inquiring glance around, but he immediately stopped, and seized his rifle, making a sign to Louis to do the same.

"Diable!" he said, "Cæsar was right, and I must confess myself a stupid fellow. Look yonder, Louis."

The other turned his eyes as directed.

"Oh! oh!" he said; "what is this?"

"Hum! I believe we shall soon discover."

"With God's help!" Louis replied, cocking his rifle.

Ten Indians in war costume, and mounted on magnificent horses, were drawn up within twenty paces of the travellers, though the latter were quite unable to comprehend how they had succeeded in approaching so near to them without being discovered.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PUELCHES.

"Eh! eh!" said Valentine, whistling sharply to his dog, who immediately came to him; "these fellows do not seem to have friendly intentions."

"They are Araucanos," said Louis.

"Do you think so? Then they are devilish ugly!"

"Well, now, I think them handsome."

"Ah, yes; that may be in an artistic point of view. But, ugly or handsome, we will await their coming."

The Indians talked among themselves.

"They are consulting to determine with what sauce they shall eat us," said Valentine.

"Not at all——"

"Bah! I tell you they are."

"Pardieu! they are not cannibals."

"No? So much the worse, that's a defect."

"You madman! you laugh at everything."

"Would you prefer my weeping a little? It appears to me that at this moment our position is not seducing."

These Indians were for the most part men of from forty to forty-five years of age, clothed in the costume of the Puelches, one of the most warlike tribes of Upper Araucania.

The man who appeared to be their chief was a man of lofty stature, expressive features, hard and haughty, but still displaying a certain frankness, a very rare quality among Indians. The only thing which distinguished him from his companions was a feather of the eagle of the Andes, planted upright on the left side of his head, in the bright red ribbon that confined his hair.

Having consulted with his companions for a few minutes, the chief advanced towards the travellers, making his horse curvet with inimitable grace, and lowered the point of his lance in sign of peace. When within three paces of Valentine he stopped, and, after slowly bowing, said to him in Spanish—

"My brothers are Muruches—foreigners—and not Culme-Huinca—despicable Spaniards?"

This question, asked in the guttural accent, and with the emphatic tone peculiar to the Indians, was perfectly understood by the young men.

"Hum!" Valentine said, "here is a savage who appears to have a little curiosity about him."

"Bah!" Louis replied, "answer him, at all events—that will do no harm."

"Why, no, that is true; we cannot easily be more compromised than we are already."

And turning towards the chief, who waited impassively—

"We are travelling," he said, laconically.

"What, alone thus?" asked the chief.

"Does that astonish you, my friend?"

"Do my brothers fear nothing?"

"What should we fear? We have nothing to lose."

"What! not even your hair?"

Louis could not refrain from laughing.

"Ah, ah! What! he is laughing at the disordered state of my hair, is he, the ugly wretch?" Valentine grumbled. "Stop a bit." Then he added, in a loud voice, "Have the goodness to pass on, gentlemen savages. Your remarks are not pleasant, I can assure you."

He cocked his rifle, and lifted it to his shoulder, as if taking aim at the chief. Louis, who had attentively followed the progress of the conversation, without saying a word imitated the action of his friend, directing the barrel of his rifle towards the group of Indians. The chief had doubtless understood but little of the speeches of his adversaries, but far from appearing terrified at the menacing attitude they assumed, he seemed to contemplate with pleasure the martial and firm deportment of the Frenchmen.

"My friend is mistaken. I have no intention of insulting him. Were not the pale-faces eating when I and my young men came up?"

"Faith! yes, chief, you say true," interrupted Louis.

"Part of our repast is very much at your service," continued Valentine, pointing with his finger to the provisions spread upon the grass.

"I accept your offer," said the Indian, cordially.

"Bravo!" cried Valentine, throwing down his rifle; "to work, then."

"Yes," replied the chief, "but upon one condition."

"What is that?" the young men asked together.

"That I shall furnish my part."

"Agreed," said Louis.

"Well, that is but fair," Valentine added, "we having but meagre fare to offer you."

"The bread of a friend is always good," the chief said, sententiously.

"That is admirably answered. But, at this moment, unfortunately, our bread is only stale biscuit."

"I will remedy that;" and the chief quickly produced maize tortillas, some charqui, and several leathern bottles filled with chica—a sort of cider made of apples and Indian corn. The whole was placed upon the grass before the two Frenchmen, who were wonderstruck at the sudden abundance. The Indians dismounted, and sat down in a circle round the travellers. The chief then said with a pleasant smile—

"Now then, let my brothers eat."

The young men did not require the cordial invitation to be repeated, but vigorously attacked the provisions so frankly offered. As soon as appetite was a little appeased conversation was resumed.

Of all men, Indians perhaps understand the laws of hospitality the best. They have an instinct of social conventions.

"My brothers are not Spaniards?" the chief said.

"That is true," Louis replied; "but how did you discover that?"

"Oh," he said, with a disdainful smile, "we are well acquainted with those *chiaplos*—wicked soldiers. From what island do my brothers come?"

"Our country is not an island," Valentine observed.

"My brother is mistaken," the chief said emphatically; "there is but one country that is not an island, and that is the great land of the Aucas."

The two young men bowed their heads.

"We are Frenchmen," Louis replied.

"Frenchmen! Ah! a good, brave nation. We had several French warriors in the time of the great war."

"What!" said Louis, with excited curiosity, "have French warriors fought with you?"

"Yes," the chief remarked proudly, "warriors with grey beards, and breasts

marked with honourable scars, which they received when they fought under the orders of their great chief, Zaleon."

"Napoleon?" said Valentine, quite astonished.

"Yes; I believe it is so the pale-face pronounces his name. Did my brother know him?" the chief added.

"No," replied the young man. "Although born in his reign, I was never able to get sight of him, and he is now dead."

"My brother is mistaken," said the Puelche; "such warriors do not die. When they have performed their task upon earth they go to Paradise."

The young men bowed, as if convinced.

"It is very singular," said Louis, "that the reputation of that powerful genius should have spread to the most remote and unknown regions of the globe, whilst in that France, for which he did everything, men invariably seek to lessen it."

"Like all their compatriots, who, from time to time, traverse our hunting-grounds, our brothers have, doubtless, trading purposes," said the chief.

"We are not traders," replied Valentine; "we came to visit our brothers, the Araucanos."

"The Moluchos love the French," the chief said, flattered by the compliment; "my brothers will be well received in our villages."

"To what tribe does my brother belong?" asked Valentine, inwardly delighted.

"I am one of the principal ulmens of the sacred tribe of the Great Hare," the chief said, proudly.

"Thank you. One word more."

"Let my brother speak; my ears are open."

"We are in search of a Molucho chief, to whom we have a message from a friend of his."

"What is the chief's name?"

"Antinahuel."

"Good!"

"Does my brother know him?"

"I know him. If my brothers will follow me they shall see the toldo of a chief. When they have rested, I will myself conduct them to Antinahuel, the most powerful toqui of the four Utal-Mapus."

"What province is governed by Antinahuel?"

"The Pire-Mapus."

"Thanks, brother."

"Will my brothers accept the offer I have made them?"

"Why should we not accept it, chief?"

"Let my brothers come, then," the chief said, with a smile; "my tolderia is not far off."

The breakfast was over, and the Indians were mounting.

"We may as well go," said Valentine, in French. "This Indian appears to speak cordially and honestly."

"Well, I see no harm that accepting the invitation can do."

"God speed us, then!"

And with a bound he was in the saddle, imitated by Louis.

"Forward!" cried the chief, and the party set off.

"Well, it must be allowed," said Valentine, "that these savages, if savages they are, have some redeeming qualities. I begin to take a warm interest in them. They are true Scotch mountaineers for hospitality. I wonder what my

regimental comrades, and more particularly my old friends of the Boulevard du Temple, would say if they could see me now ! ”

Louis laughed, and, without making further inquiries, the young men gaily abandoned themselves to the guidance of their new friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLACK JACKAL.

WE are obliged here to relate an adventure which happened more than twenty years before.

Towards the end of the month of December, 1816, on a cold, rainy night, a traveller, mounted on an excellent horse, was following at a round trot the blind path on the mountains which leads from Cruces to San Jose. This man was a rich landowner, who was making a journey into Araucania. Having left Cruces about two o'clock in the afternoon, he had been delayed on his way by settling some business with various *huasos*.

For several days past the Puelches had appeared in arms upon the frontiers of Chili, and made incursions into the territories of the republic, burning the chacras, and carrying off the families they surprised. These marauders were commanded by a chief named The Black Jackal, whose cruelty spread terror among the people exposed to his depredations.

It was, therefore, with some anxiety that the man we have spoken of made all speed along the desolate road. Every minute only added to his fears. The storm, which had threatened all day, burst forth at last with a fury of which we have no conception. The wind roared loudly through the trees, bending some and uprooting others. The rain fell in torrents, and the lightning became so vivid that the horse began to plunge and rear, and refused to advance. The rider spurred the restive animal, and endeavoured, as well as the darkness would permit, to discover whereabouts he was. After surmounting immense difficulties, he saw at length in the distance the shadow of the walls of his hacienda, and the lights which shone like guiding stars, when suddenly his horse bounded on one side in such a way as almost to unseat him. When he looked round to see what could have frightened it so, he perceived, with terror equal to the horse's, several men of sinister appearance standing motionless before him. The horseman's first movement was to seize his pistols.

“Keep your hands from your weapons, Don Antonio Quintana,” said a rough voice ; “we desire neither your life nor your money.”

“What do you want then ? ” he replied.

“Hospitality for this night in the first place,” said the other.

Don Antonio endeavoured to ascertain if he knew the man who was speaking to him.

“The doors of my dwelling always fly open to the stranger,” he remarked ; “why have you not knocked ? ”

“Knowing you must come this way, I preferred waiting for you.”

“What else do you desire of me, then ? ”

“I will tell you under your own roof.”

“If you have nothing more to say to me now, and are as willing as I am to get under shelter, we will continue our journey.”

“Go on, then ; we will follow you.”

Without exchanging another word, they directed their course towards the

hacienda. Don Antonio Quintana was a resolute man. In spite of the fluency with which the one who had spoken employed the Spanish language, he had, at the first word, by his guttural accent, perceived he was an Indian.

On arriving at the hacienda, Don Antonio found he was not mistaken; the men who had accosted him were really Indians. There were four of them, and with them was a young woman with a child at the breast. The hacendero welcomed them to his dwelling with all the minute forms of Chilian courtesy, and gave orders to his peons, or Indian domestics, to assist them with everything they might desire.

"Eat and drink," he said; "you are at home here."

"Thanks!" replied the man, who had till that time been spokesman. "We accept your offer with as good a will as you give it, as far as regards food."

"Will you not rest till day?" asked Don Antonio; "the night is dark, and the weather frightful."

"A black night is what we desire; besides, we must depart immediately."

"Explain yourself," said the Spaniard, examining the speaker attentively.

The latter was a tall, well-made man of about forty.

"It was I," he said, without preamble, "who directed the last invasion made upon the pale-faces of the frontiers. My *mosotones* were all killed yesterday in an ambuscade by your *laneros*; the three that you see with me are all that remain of a troop of two hundred warriors; the others are dead. I myself am wounded, hunted, tracked like a wild beast; we are without horses to rejoin our tribe. I come to ask of you the means of escape from our pursuers. I will neither deceive nor surprise your good faith. I am bound to tell you the name of the man whose safety you hold in your hands. I am the greatest enemy of the Spaniards; my life has been passed in contending with them. I am the Black Jackal."

On hearing this redoubtable name the Chilian could not suppress a start of terror; but immediately recovering his self-possession, he replied, in a kind tone—

"You are my guest, and you are unfortunate, two titles sacred with me. I desire to know nothing more; you shall have horses and arms."

A smile of ineffable sweetness lit up the countenance of the Indian.

Then the chief took by the hand the young Indian squaw, who had remained cowering and weeping in a corner, rocking her child in her arms, and presented her to Don Antonio.

"This woman belongs to me; this child is mine," he said, "and I will confide them both to you."

"I will take charge of them; the young woman shall be my sister, the child my son," the hacendero replied, kindly.

"The *apo-ulmen* will remember," said the *Puelche*.

He imprinted a kiss upon the brow of the poor little creature, who smiled upon him, cast upon the woman a look beaming with tenderness, and rushed out of the house.

Many years passed away ere Don Antonio heard anything of the Black Jackal; the woman and the child remained at the hacienda, and were treated as if they had been members of the Chilian's family. The hacendero had been married; but, unfortunately, after a year which promised to be the commencement of a happy union, the wife died when giving birth to a beautiful little girl, whom her father named Maria. The two children grew up together, watched over by the anxious solicitude of the Indian woman.

At length, one day, a numerous troop of *Puelches*, magnificently equipped and mounted, arrived at *Ric-Ciario*, the town in which Don Antonio resided.

The chief of these Indians was the Black Jackal, who came to redemand his wife and son. The chief forgot his Indian stoicism ; he gave himself up to the feelings which agitated him, and enjoyed the happiness of finding again, after such a length of time, the two beings he held dearest in the world. When it became necessary to depart, and the children learnt they were to be separated, they shed abundance of tears.

Don Antonio had extended his traffic over different parts of the frontiers ; he possessed chacras in which the breeding of cattle was carried on upon a vast scale. The Black Jackal, who had sworn a perpetual friendship, became of great use to him in his business transactions. Every year Don Antonio visited all his chacras in Araucania, and passed a couple of months among the tribe of the Black Serpents with the Black Jackal. His daughter accompanied him in all these journeys.

At the period when our history commences, the Black Jackal was dead : he had fallen, like a brave warrior, with his weapons in his hand, in a combat on the frontier ; his son, Antinahuel, now about thirty-five years of age, who promised to tread in his footsteps, had been elected apo-ulmen in his place. Don Antonio had likewise died, shortly after the marriage of his daughter, Dona Maria, with Don Tadeo de Leon, brought to an untimely grave by his grief at her misconduct.

Dona Maria for some years past had only seen Antinahuel at long intervals ; great, then, was the astonishment of the warriors of the tribe of the Black Serpents when, in the evening of the day on which we have resumed our story, they saw Dona Maria arrive on horseback, accompanied only by two peons. On perceiving her the usual gloomy face of the chief was suddenly lighted up with an expression of gladness.

"Eglantine of the Woods !" he cried, in a joyous tone, "does my sister then still remember the poor Indian ?"

"I have come to visit the toldo of my brother," she said, turning her brow towards him, upon which he impressed a kiss ; "my heart is sad, grief devours me."

The chief cast upon her a look of anxiety, mingled with sorrow.

"Although it be to trouble that I owe the visit of my sister, I am, nevertheless, rejoiced to see her."

"Yes," she resumed, "when we are in trouble we think of our friends."

"My sister has done well in thinking of me."

"My brother can render me a great service."

"My life is my sister's."

"Thank you ! I was certain I could depend upon my brother."

"Everywhere, and at all times."

After bowing respectfully to Dona Maria, he led her into his rancho, where his mother had prepared everything worthy of the visit.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO OLD FRIENDS.

ANTINAHUEL, the Tiger Sun, was at that time a man of about thirty-five years of age. In stature he was tall, and in his carriage majestic ; everything in his person announced a man accustomed to command, and made to rule over his

fellows. As a warrior, his reputation was immense, and his *mosotones* held him in superstitious veneration.

The cloth was laid in the *toldo*—we make use of the expression, the cloth was laid, advisedly, because the Araucano chiefs are perfectly well acquainted with European customs, and possess dishes, plates, silver spoons and forks. It is true, they only make use of these upon great occasions.

Dona Maria seated herself at the table, and made a sign to Antinahuel, who stood respectfully beside her, to keep her company. It was clear to the Indian chief that his sister, as he called her, who for some years had completely neglected him, must have been induced by some powerful interest to seek him thus in his remote village.

On her side, the young woman was a prey to still greater uneasiness, for she was anxious to discover whether, in spite of her neglect of the chief, she had preserved the boundless power she had formerly exercised over that Indian nature, which civilisation had softened rather than subdued.

When the repast was ended, a peon brought in the *mate*, the infusion of the Paraguay herb which, with the Chilians, takes the place of tea, and of which they are very fond. Two chased cups, placed upon a filagree salver, were presented to Dona Maria and the chief; they lit their maize papillos, and smoked, whilst sipping their *mate* reflectively. After a few minutes' silence Dona Maria, who perceived that Antinahuel was resolved to act on the defensive, determined to open the attack.

"My brother," she said, "is surprised at my sudden arrival."

"It is true; the Eglantine of the Woods has appeared unexpectedly; she is not the less welcome."

And he bowed.

"I am glad to observe that my brother is as gallant as ever."

"I love my sister, and I am happy to see her, after being so long deprived of her presence."

"I know your friendship for me, Penni; our childhood was passed together, but it is long since that time."

"The Eglantine of the Woods is my sister; her least wishes shall always be sacred with me."

"Thanks; but let us talk of our early years, which, alas! so quickly glided away."

"Yesterday exists no longer," he said, sententiously.

"That's true," she replied; "why, indeed, should we talk of times that can never come back?"

"Does my sister intend to return to Chili?"

"No; I have left Santiago for a time; I intend, for a season, to take up my abode at Valdivia. I left my friends to continue their route, whilst I came on to pay my respects to my brother."

"Yes, I know that the man whom the pale-faces call General Bustamente, though scarcely cured of a dangerous wound, set off, a month ago, to visit the province of Valdivia."

"There are many pale-faces from the south there at present."

"Among these strangers are there any that I know?"

"Good heavens! how can I tell? Yes, Don Tadeo, my husband."

Antinahuel raised his head in astonishment.

"I thought he had been shot!" he said.

"He escaped death, though grievously wounded."

The artful woman endeavoured to read what impression the news she had so coolly imparted made.

"Listen to me, my sister," he resumed; "Don Tadeo is still your enemy, is he not?"

"Yes: not content with having basely abandoned me, and having torn from me my child, the innocent creature who alone consoled me and enabled me to support the sorrows with which he has overwhelmed me, he has crowned his insults by publicly paying his addresses to another woman, whom he takes with him everywhere, and who is at this moment his companion at Valdivia."

"Hum!" the chief said, carelessly.

Accustomed to Araucanian manners, which permit every man to take as many wives as he can support, he found the action of Don Tadeo perfectly natural. This did not escape Dona Maria: an ironical smile curled for a second the corners of her lips, and she continued, negligently, but looking earnestly in the face of the chief—

"Yes, the woman is called, as I hear, Dona Rosario de Mendoz; and is, they say, a beautiful creature."

That name, pronounced with such apparent indifference, produced the effect of a clap of thunder upon the chief.

"Rosario de Mendoz, did you say, my sister?" he shouted.

"Good heavens! I hardly know," she replied. "I have only heard her name—but," she added, "what interest can my brother take in it?"

"Oh! none," he said, as he quietly resumed his seat. "Why does not my sister avenge herself upon the man?"

"To what purpose? and, besides, I am but a weak and timid woman, without friends, without support."

"And I?" said the chief; "what am I, then?"

"Oh!" she replied, warmly; "I would not on any account that my brother should constitute himself the avenger of an insult that is personal to myself."

"My sister is mistaken; in attacking this man I avenge my own insult."

"My brother must explain himself."

"That is what I am going to do."

"I am all attention."

At this moment Antinahuel's mother entered the toldo, and said—

"My son is wrong in thus recalling old remembrances and opening ancient wounds again."

"Woman!" the Indian replied, "retire! I am a warrior! my father left me a vengeance. I have sworn."

The poor mother left the toldo with a sigh. The linda, whose curiosity was excited, awaited impatiently the chief's explanation. Without, the rain fell pattering upon the leaves of the trees; at intervals a blast of night-wind, loaded with uncertain sounds, came whistling through the ill-joined boards of the toldo, and caused the flame of the torch which lighted it to waver unsteadily. The two speakers, though absorbed in their own reflections, involuntarily lent an ear to these nameless sounds, and felt a depression of spirits they could not account for. The chief commenced in a low voice—

"Although my sister is almost a child of the nation, as my mother nursed her, she has never been made acquainted with the history of my family. The history I am about to relate will reveal to her that I have against Don Tadeo de Leon an old hatred."

Don Maria bowed assentingly.

"When the vile Spaniards," he continued, "conquered Chili, and reduced its inhabitants to slavery, they dreamt of subjugating Araucania, and marched against the Aucas, whose frontiers they violated. The conflict was terrible; it lasted from the rising to the setting of the sun. Many warriors departed for

the happy prairies, but Pillian did not abandon the Aucas; they were conquerors, and the Chiaplo fled like timid hares. Numbers of pale-faces fell into our hands; among them was Don Estevan de Leon. The toqui Cadegual might have employed his rights, and have killed him, but he did nothing of the kind: so far from it, he led him to his toldo, and treated him with kindness as a brother. But when did Spaniards ever show themselves grateful for a kindness? Don Estevan, forgetful of the sacred duties of hospitality, seduced the daughter of the man to whom he owed his life, and one day disappeared with

The grief of the toqui was immense; he swore to wage from that time a less war against the pale-faces, and he kept his oath. These terrible risals were just, were they not?"

"Yes," said the linda laconically.

"One day, Cadegual, surprised by his ferocious enemies, fell, covered with wounds, into their hands. In his turn, as it happened, Cadegual was in the power of Don Estevan de Leon. The Spanish chief recollected the man who had, years before, saved his life. He was merciful. After cutting off the hands, and scooping out the eyes of his prisoner, he restored to him his daughter, of whom he was tired. The toqui was led back by his child, whom he pardoned. When he joined his tribe, Cadegual called together his relations, related to them what he had suffered, showed them his bleeding and mutilated arms, and, after having made his sons and all his relations swear to avenge him, he allowed himself to die of hunger."

"Oh, that is frightful!" Dona Maria cried.

"That is nothing yet!" the chief resumed; "let my sister listen. From that time an implacable destiny has always hung over the two families. During three centuries this ardent, inveterate struggle has lasted, and will never terminate but by the extinction of one, or perhaps both. Up to the present time the advantage has almost always been on the side of the Leons. At the present day the family of Don Estevan has but one representative, Don Tadeo—a representative formidable through his courage, his fortune, and his immense influence. He, personally, has never injured the Aucas; he seems even to be ignorant of the inveterate hatred which exists between his family and that of the toqui; but the descendants of Cade ual do not forget it: they are strong, numerous, and powerful in their turn; the hour of vengeance has struck, they will not let it escape."

"Your mother asked you properly, Penni, why should you revive old hatreds. The whites are numerous; they have many warlike soldiers."

"Oh," he replied, with a sinister look; "I am sure of succeeding, for I have my nymph."

Indians of high rank all entertain a firm belief that they have a familiar genius, who is bound to obey them.

Dona Maria feigned to yield to this reason; she had succeeded in putting the hunter upon the scent of the game she wished to destroy. She knew perfectly well that the hatred alleged by the chief was nothing but a pretext, and that the real cause remained hidden in the depths of his heart.

She continued talking with Antinahuel for some time longer about indifferent subjects, and then retired to her chamber. It was late, and she wished to set out for Valdivia at daybreak. She was sufficiently well acquainted with the companion of her childhood to know that, now the tiger was roused, it would not be long before he started in quest of his prey.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SORCERER.

ON the same day, a tolderia, situated at some miles from Orano, was a scene of the greatest commotion. The women and warriors assembled in front of a toldo, on the threshold of which was exposed a corpse, lying as it were in state upon a bed of branches, were uttering cries and groans, which were mingled with the deafening sound of drums and flutes in most dismal discord, and the continuous howling of dogs, whom all this din rendered furious. In the middle of the crowd, by the side of the body, stood a man advanced in years, tall in stature, and clothed in the costume of a woman, who appeared to direct the ceremony, making extraordinary gestures and contortions, accompanied by scarcely human yells. This man, of a ferocious aspect, was the machi, or sorcerer of the tribe.

"Ulmen of the powerful tribe of the Great Hare," he said, in a sepulchral tone, "thy father, the valiant ulmen, who has been ravished from us by Pillian, is no longer in dread of the influence of the evil genius, whom I have forced to depart; he now hunts in the happy prairies of the Eskennane with the just warriors."

"Stop!" the chief replied, warmly; "my father is dead, but who has killed him? A warrior does not succumb thus, in a few hours, unless some secret influence has weighed upon him. Answer me, tell me the name of the assassin! My heart is sad."

At these words, pronounced in a firm voice, a shudder crept through the ranks of the people. The machi, after having looked searchingly round, cast down his eyes, crossed his arms upon his breast, and appeared to reflect.

The Araucanos only think one sort of death possible—that on the field of battle; they do not suppose any one can lose his life by either accident or disease. In these two cases they always attribute death to the action of an occult power, and are persuaded that some enemy of the defunct has cast the charm upon him that has killed him.

Fresh personages, among whom were Valentine and his friend, had arrived at the village, and, attracted by curiosity, mingled with the crowd collected round the body. The two Frenchmen could not comprehend anything of this scene.

"Speak!" said the ulmen, after a short pause. "Does not my father know the name of the man of whom we must demand an account of this murder?"

"I know him," the sorcerer replied, in a solemn tone.

"Why, then, does the inspired machi preserve silence?"

"Because," the machi said, looking this time the newly-arrived chief full in the face, "there are powerful men who laugh at human justice."

The eyes of the crowd turned to the man whom the sorcerer appeared indirectly to point out.

"The guilty man," the ulmen cried, in a loud voice, "whatever be his rank in the tribe, shall not escape my just vengeance; speak without fear, priest of fate!"

The machi drew himself up majestically; he raised his arm slowly, and, amidst the general anxious curiosity, he, with his finger, pointed to the chief who had offered such cordial hospitality to the strangers.

"Accomplish your oath, then, ulmen—that is the assassin of your father; Trangoil-Lanec cast the charm upon him which has killed him!"

And the machi veiled his face with the corner of his poncho, as if overwhelmed with grief.

The sorcerer's terrible words were succeeded by the silence of astonishment. Trangoil-Lanec, who was the last man in the tribe who would have been suspected, remained impassive; a smile of disdain passed over his lips, he dismounted from his horse, and waited.

The ulmen walked slowly towards him, and when within a few paces, asked, in a sorrowful voice—

"Why didst thou kill my father, Trangoil-Lanec? He loved thee, and I, was not I thy Penni?"

"I have not killed thy father, Curumilla," the chief replied, with a tone of frankness that would have convinced a man less prejudiced than the one he addressed.

"The machi has said so."

"The machi lies."

"No, the machi cannot lie—thou, thy wife, and thy children must die; the law decrees that it shall be so."

Without deigning to reply, the chief threw down his arms, and went and placed himself beside the stake of blood, planted in front of the sacred idol. A circle was formed, of which the stake formed the centre; the wife and children of the chief were brought up, and were prepared immediately for the sacrifice; for the funeral ceremony of the chief could not be completed before the execution of his murderer. The machi was triumphant.

The two Frenchmen had anxiously watched the spectacle of this infamous drama; Louis was disgusted with the rascality of the machi.

"Oh!" he said to his friend, "we cannot allow this murder to be accomplished."

"Hum!" muttered Valentine, stroking the ends of his light moustache. There is a great number of them."

"What matters it how many?" replied Louis; "I will not be the witness of such iniquity. I will attempt to save the life of that unfortunate man."

"The fact is," Valentine said, "this Trangoil-Lanec, as they call him, is a very worthy fellow; but what can we do?"

"Pardieu!" Louis said, "rush between him and his enemies; we can each of us kill five or six."

"Yes, and the others will kill us without our having succeeded in saving the man for whom we devote ourselves. Let us try to find some other plan."

"We must be quick, then; the torture is about to commence."

Valentine struck his forehead, and cried, with a jeering laugh—

"Bah! I have it! Trick must serve our turn—leave it to me; my old trade of a mountebank will do. Help me; but, for heaven's sake, remain calm."

"I swear I will, if you save him."

"Be satisfied—against rogue I'll play rogue and a half."

Valentine urged his horse into the middle of the circle, and shouted—

"Stop a minute!"

At the unexpected appearance of this man, whom nobody had yet observed, all turned round and looked at him with astonishment. Louis, with his hands on his pistols, watched his movements with anxiety.

"We will not joke," continued Valentine, "we have not time for that. You are a set of fools, and your machi is laughing at you. What! would you kill a

man without a moment's reflection, because a rogue bids you do so? Caramba! I have taken it into my head to prevent your committing such a folly."

And placing his hand upon his hip, he looked round with an intrepid glance. The Indians, according to their strange custom, listened to this speech without evincing surprise. Curumilla approached him.

"My pale brother must retire," he said, calmly; "he is unacquainted with the laws of the Puelches; this man is condemned."

"I repeat to you, you are fools!" said Valentine, shrugging his shoulders; "your machi is no more a conjurer than I am. I tell you he is cheating you."

"What says my father?" said Curumilla to the machi, who stood cold and motionless.

The machi smiled disdainfully.

"When did the white man ever speak truth?" he replied with a sneer.

"Good!" the ulmen said; "the Murucho may speak."

"Pardieu!" cried Valentine. "Notwithstanding the bold-faced assurance of this individual, I shall find it no difficult matter to prove that he is an impostor."

"We are attentive," said Curumilla.

The Indians drew round with intense curiosity. Louis could not at all make out what his friend proposed to do. He could only suppose that some extravagant idea had crossed his brain, and was as impatient as the rest to see how he would act.

"One moment!" said the machi; "what will my brothers do if I prove my accusation true?"

"The stranger must die," said Curumilla, coolly.

"I accept the terms," Valentine replied, resolutely, and then exclaimed, pompously—

"I, too, am I great medicine man!"

The Indians bowed reverentially. The science of Europeans is perfectly established among them.

"It was not Trangoil-Lanec," continued the Frenchman, with the greatest audacity, "who killed the chief; it was the machi himself."

A start of astonishment pervaded the assembly.

"I!" cried the machi, in a voice of amazement.

"You, yourself, and you know it well," replied Valentine, giving him a look that made him tremble.

"Stranger," said Trangoil-Lanec, with the majesty of a martyr, "it is no use to interpose in my favour; my brothers believe me guilty."

"Your devotion to your laws is noble, but in this case it is absurd," Valentine replied.

"This man is guilty," the machi persisted.

"Let us put an end to this, then," replied Trangoil-Lanec; "kill me!"

"What say my brothers?" Curumilla asked.

"That the Murucho medicine-man be allowed to prove the truth of his words," replied the warriors.

They loved Trangoil-Lanec, and in their hearts desired that he should not die. On the other hand, they entertained for the machi a profound hatred.

"Very well," said Valentine, "this is what I propose."

All were silent as the grave. The Frenchman drew his sword, and waved the bright blade before the eyes of the spectators.

"You see this weapon," said he; "I will put it into my mouth, and swallow it up to the hilt. If Trangoil-Lanec is guilty, I shall die; if he is innocent, as I affirm, I shall draw forth the sword from my body without suffering a wound."

"My brother speaks like a courageous warrior," said Curumilla; "we are ready to behold."

"I will not suffer it!" Trangoil-Lanec shouted. "Does my brother want to kill himself?"

"Pillian is judge," Valentine replied, with a smile of strange expression.

The two Frenchmen exchanged a glance. The Indians are perfect children in their love of spectacle, and the extraordinary proposal of the Parisian seemed to them to admit of no reply.

"The trial! the trial!" they shouted.

"Very well," said Valentine.

He first placed himself in the proper position adopted by jugglers when they exhibit this feat in public places; then introducing the blade of the sword into his mouth, in a few seconds the whole of it disappeared. During the performance of this trick, which in their eyes was a miracle, the Puelches watched the Frenchman in breathless terror. They could not comprehend how a man could perform such an operation without deliberately killing himself. Valentine turned on all sides, so that every one might be convinced of the reality of the fact; then he deliberately withdrew the blade from his mouth, as bright as when it came from the sheath. A cry of enthusiasm burst from the crowd.

"One minute more," he said; "I have still something to demand of you."

Silence was in an instant re-established.

"I have proved to you, in an incontrovertible manner, that the chief is not guilty—have I not?"

"Yes! yes!" they shouted simultaneously; "the pale-face is a great medicine man."

"Very well. Now, then," he added, with a sardonic smile, "your machi should prove in his turn that I have calumniated him, and that it was not he who killed the apo-ulmen of your tribe. The dead chief was a great warrior; he ought to be avenged."

"Yes," the warriors cried, "he ought to be avenged."

"My brother speaks well," observed Curumilla; "let the machi be put to the proof."

The unfortunate machi perceived at once that he was lost. He became livid.

"This man is an impostor," he muttered, in a voice scarcely audible; "he abuses your good faith."

"Perhaps I am," said Valentine; "but, in the meantime, imitate me."

"Here," said Curumilla, holding out the sword, "if you are innocent, Pillian will protect you."

"Caramba! that is certain; Pillian always protects the innocent, and you are about to be a proof of it," said the Parisian.

The machi cast around a look of despair; all eyes were expressive of impatience and curiosity; the unhappy wretch perceived but too plainly that he could look for help to nobody, and he formed his resolution instantly.

"I fear nothing," he said, in a firm voice; "this steel will be harmless to me. You desire that I should go through the trial—I will obey. But, beware! Pillian is angry with your conduct towards me."

At these words of their prophet the Puelches were moved. They hesitated. For many long years they had been accustomed to place entire faith in his predictions, and they experienced a kind of fear in thus daring to accuse him of imposture.

"Capitally well played," said Valentine, replying by a knowing wink; "now it is my turn. Let my brothers take heart!" he added, in a loud, firm voice.

"No misfortune threatens them; this man speaks thus because he is afraid to die."

The machi darted a glance at him gleaming with hatred, seized the sword, and, imitating as well as he knew how what he had seen, with desperate quickness plunged the blade down his throat. A stream of black blood sprang from his mouth, his eyes glared hideously, his arms shook convulsively, he staggered two steps forward, and fell flat upon his face. The people crowded round him—he was dead.

"Let this lying dog be thrown to the vultures," said Curumilla, kicking the lifeless body with contempt.

"We are brothers for life and death," cried Lanec.

"Well," the young man said with a smile, to his friend, "I think I have not got very badly through that affair—eh? You see it is well sometimes to have practised many trades; even that of a mountebank may serve at need."

"Do not calumniate your heart," Louis replied, warmly pressing his hand; "you have saved a man."

"Ay; but I have killed another."

"Oh, he was a guilty wretch!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OBSEQUIES OF AN APO-ULMEN

THE emotion caused by the death of the machi gradually died away, and order was re-established.

"Now my father is avenged, we can restore his body to the earth," Curumilla observed. Then, advancing towards the strangers, he bowed to them, saying—

"Will the pale-faces assist the obsequies?"

"We will," Louis replied.

"My toldo is large," the chief continued; "my brothers will do me honour by consenting to inhabit it during their sojourn with the tribe."

Louis was about to reply, but Trangoil-Lanec hastily prevented him.

"My brothers the pale-faces," he said, "have deigned to accept my poor hospitality."

The young men bowed in silence.

"Good!" the ulmen continued. "Of what consequence is that? Whichever be the toldo the Muruchos may choose, I shall consider them as my guests."

"Many thanks, chief," Valentine replied; "be assured that we are grateful for your kindness."

The ulmen then took leave of the Frenchmen, and resumed his place by the side of his father's corpse, and the ceremonies commenced.

At a signal from Curumilla, the warriors drew back to give place to the women, who surrounded the body, and began to walk in a circle, singing in a low and plaintive tone the noble feats of the deceased. At the expiration of about an hour, the cortege moved off after the corpse, which was borne by the four most renowned warriors of the tribe, and directed its course towards a hill where the place of sepulture was prepared. Behind followed the women, casting handfuls of hot ashes over the traces left by the passage of the funeral train; so that if the soul of the defunct should have any inclination to return to its body, it would not be able to find the way to his toldo, or come and trouble his heirs.

When the body was laid in the grave, Curumilla cut the throats of his father's dogs and horses, which were placed near him, to enable him to hunt in the happy prairies. Within reach of his hand was placed a certain quantity of provisions for the nourishment of himself and the tempulazzy, or boatman, appointed to convey him to the other country.

Earth was then thrown in upon the body. But, as the defunct had been a renowned warrior, a heap of stones was collected, of which a pyramid was formed; then every one walked slowly once more round the tomb, pouring upon it a great quantity of chicha. The relations and friends returned dancing and singing to the village, where awaited them one of those Homeric repasts of Araucanian funerals called cahuins, which last till all the partakers lie upon the ground utterly intoxicated.

Trangoil-Lanec, as we have said, was one of the richest and most respected chiefs of his tribe, and had eight wives. Polygamy is allowed. When an Indian is desirous of marrying a woman, he declares his purpose to her parent, and fixes the number of animals he is willing to give. His conditions being accepted, he comes with a few friends, carries off the young woman, throws her on the saddle behind him, and gallops off to the woods, in the depths of which the couple remain three days. On the fourth they return: he slaughters a young mare in front of the hut of the father of his bride, and the marriage festivities begin. The abduction of the bride and the sacrifice of the mare take the place of a civil contract.

The two Frenchmen, thrown so suddenly into the midst of these strange manners and customs, were some time before they could comprehend Indian life. Valentine, in particular, was completely at a loss; he was in a state of perpetual astonishment, which, however, he took care should not appear in his words or in his actions.

One evening, when Louis was preparing, as he frequently did, to visit the various toldos, in order to inquire after the sick, and administer to them all the relief his limited knowledge of medicine permitted, Curumilla came to the two strangers to invite them to be present at the cahuin given by the new machi, who had been elected that day, in place of the dead one. Valentine promised that they would come.

From what we have said before, it may easily be comprehended what an enormous influence a sorcerer possesses over the members of the tribe; the choice is therefore difficult to make, and is seldom a good one. The sorcerer is generally a woman: when it is a man, he assumes the female costume.

After smoking a considerable number of pipes, and making endless speeches, the Araucanos had chosen, as a successor to the machi, an old man, of a mild, kindly character.

The repast was, as may be supposed, copious, abundantly furnished with ulpo, the national dish of the Araucanos, and moistened with an incalculable number of couis of chicha. Among the other delicacies which figured at the feast was a large basket filled with hard eggs.

"Why don't you eat some eggs?" said Curumilla to Valentine. "Do you not like them?"

"On the contrary, chief, I am very fond of eggs, but not cooked in that fashion."

"Oh! yes," the ulmen said; "I understand; you prefer them raw."

Valentine burst into a Homeric fit of laughter.

"Not better than these," he said, when he had recovered his gravity. "I like eggs boiled in the shell; I like omelettes, or pancakes, but neither hard nor raw, if you please."

"What do you mean by that? Cooked eggs must be hard."

The young man looked at him with astonishment, and then said to him in a tone of profound compassion—

"Now, really, chief, do you mean to say you are only acquainted with hard eggs?"

"Our fathers have always eaten them thus."

"Poor people! how I pity them! They have been ignorant of one of the greatest enjoyments of life. Well, my friend," he exclaimed, "I am determined you shall adore me as a benefactor to humanity. In short, I will endow you with soft-boiled eggs and with omelettes; at least, the remembrance of me shall not die from among you."

In spite of his sadness, Louis could not help laughing at the burlesque humour and inexhaustible cheerfulness of his foster-brother, in whom, at every minute, the gamin prevailed over the serious man. The chiefs welcomed with joy the offer of the spahi, and asked, with loud cries, on what day he would carry his promise.

"Oh, I will not make you wait long," he said; "to-morrow, on the square of the tolderia, and before all the assembled tribe of the Great Hare, I will show you how you must set about boiling an egg and making an omelette."

CHAPTER XXII.

EXPLANATIONS.

WE will now return to the chakra of Don Gregorio Peralta, to which Dona Rosario had been conducted after her miraculous deliverance. The first days that followed the departure of the two Frenchmen were sufficiently devoid of incident. Dona Rosario, shut up in her bedroom, remained alone. The poor girl, like all wounded spirits, sought to forget reality, by taking refuge in dreams, in order to collect and preserve piously in the depths of her heart the few happy remembrances which had so rarely gilded with a ray of sunshine the sadness of her existence. Don Tadeo, completely absorbed in his political combinations, could only see her now and then. Before him, she endeavoured to appear cheerful, but she suffered the more from being obliged to conceal in her own bosom the sorrow which consumed her. She occasionally crept down into the garden; she stopped under the arbour in which her meeting with Louis had taken place, and remained hours together thinking of him she loved.

This poor child, so beautiful, so mild, so pure, so worthy of being loved, was condemned by an implacable destiny to lead a life of suffering and isolation, without a relation, without a friend to whom she might impart the secret of her grief. She was little more than sixteen, and already her bruised heart shrank back upon itself.

The maiden's story was a strange one. She had never known her parents; she had no remembrance of the kisses of her mother—those warm caresses of childhood, which make even mature age tremble with joy. From her earliest days she could only remember being alone, always alone, in the hands of the mercenary.

Don Tadeo was the only person who was attached to her; he had never abandoned her, but watched with the greatest care over her material well-

being, smiled upon her, and ever gave her good and pleasant counsels; but Don Tadeo was much too serious a man to comprehend the thousand little cares which the education of a young girl requires.

The visits of Don Tadeo were surrounded by an incomprehensible mystery; sometimes, without apparent cause, he made her suddenly quit people to whom he had confided her, and took her away with him, after ordering her to change her name, upon long tours. It was thus she had been to France: then he quite as unexpectedly brought her back to Chili.

She had often, urged by the instinct of curiosity so natural to her age in the exceptional position in which she was placed, sought by adroit questions to seize the thread that might guide her in this labyrinth; but all had proved useless. Don Tadeo remained mute. One day only, after having for a long time contemplated her with an expression of sadness, he pressed her to his heart, and said in a trembling voice—

“Poor child! I will protect you against your enemies!”

One evening, when, sad and thoughtful as usual, and buried in the depths of an easy-chair, in her bedchamber, she was turning over the leaves of a book which she was not reading, Don Tadeo entered the room. He saluted her, as he always did, by a kiss on her brow, and said quietly—

“I wish to speak with you, Rosario.”

“I am all attention, dear friend,” she replied, endeavouring to smile.

“My dear child,” he said, “I have sad news to inform you of.”

“Speak, my kind friend,” she replied.

“Urgent affairs require my presence as soon as possible in Valdivia.”

“Oh!” she cried, with an expression of terror, “you will not leave me here, will you?”

“At first I intended to do so, this retreat appearing to me to unite all guarantees; but cheer up, my child. I have fancied you would prefer accompanying me?”

“Oh, yes,” she said, eagerly; “you are always kind. When do we set out?”

“To-morrow, dear child, at sunrise.”

“I shall be ready,” she replied, holding up her pretty face towards him, that he might impress his customary kiss upon her brow.

Don Tadeo retired, and Rosario immediately set about the preparations for her journey. Of what consequence was it to her whether she were in one place or another, since she was doomed to suffer everywhere? And who can say whether the poor girl, without daring to avow it to herself, did not entertain the hope of again seeing him she loved?

Valdivia, founded in 1551 by the Spanish conqueror, Don Pedro de Valdivia, is a charming city, two leagues from the sea, upon the left bank of a river, which large vessels can easily ascend. The aspect of the city, the advanced post of civilisation in these remote countries, is most agreeable; the streets are large and uniformly built; the white houses, only one storey high, on account of the frequency of earthquakes, are terrace-roofed. Here and there rise in the air the steeples of the numerous churches and convents, which occupy more than a third of the city.

Don Tadeo arrived in Valdivia, accompanied by Don Gregorio and Dona Rosario, on the evening of the sixteenth day after his departure from his friend's chakra. They had used all diligence, and, for that country, where there are no other means of travelling but on horseback, it might be considered a quick journey.

If the two gentlemen had thought proper to do so, they might have entered

the city about three o'clock in the afternoon, but they deemed it advisable that no one in a place where so many people knew them should be made aware of their arrival: in the first place, because the causes which brought them there required the greatest secrecy; and, further, because Don Tadeo was forced to conceal himself, in order to avoid the police agents of the president of the republic.

As during his sojourn at Valdivia his manner of living must be regulated by the affairs which brought him there, he could not openly keep house or appear in public. Don Tadeo went straight to the convent of the Ursulines, and committed the young lady he had brought with him to the care of the abbess. Dona Rosario accepted without hesitation the asylum which was offered to her, and where she fancied she should be safe from the attacks of her enemies. Don Tadeo took an affectionate leave of her and the venerable abbess, and hastened to a house of the calle San Xavier, where Don Gregorio awaited his coming.

"Well?" asked Don Gregorio, as soon as he saw him.

"She is in safety; at least I suppose so."

"So much the better, for we must redouble our precautions."

"Why so?"

"After leaving you I made inquiries. I observed; I questioned people as I walked about and loitered at the port and the Alameda."

"Well, what have you learnt?"

"General Bustamente is here."

"Already!"

"He arrived three days ago."

"What reason could be so important as to bring him here?" said Don Tadeo, with an uneasy expression.

"Another thing: who do you think accompanies him?"

"The executioner, no doubt!" said Don Tadeo, with an ironical smile.

"Almost as bad," Don Gregorio replied.

"Whom do you mean, then?"

"The linda!"

The chief of the Dark Hearts turned deadly pale.

"Oh," he said, "that woman! you must be mistaken."

"I have seen her."

Don Tadeo walked about in great agitation for several minutes; then, stopping short in front of his friend, he said, in a husky voice—

"Dear Don Gregorio, are you certain you have not been misled by a resemblance?"

"You had just left me, and I was coming hither, when the sound of horses made me turn my head, and I saw the linda. She also appeared to have just arrived at Valdivia; two lancers escorted her."

"Oh!" said Don Tadeo, "will the infernal malice of that demon ever pursue me?"

"My friend," Don Gregorio remarked, "in the path we have undertaken every obstacle must be destroyed."

"What, kill a woman!" the gentleman said, with horror.

"I do not say that, but place her in such a position that she cannot possibly injure any one. Remember, we are Dark Hearts, and, as such, we ought to be without pity."

"Silence!" Don Tadeo murmured, as two low, quick taps were struck on the door.

"Come in!" cried Don Gregorio.

The door opened, and Don Pedro showed his polecat face. He did not recognise the two men.

"God preserve you, gentlemen!" he said.

"What is your pleasure, sir?" Don Gregorio asked.

"Sir," said Don Pedro, looking about for a seat, "I have just arrived from Santiago."

Don Gregorio bowed again.

"On my departure from that city, a banker in whose hands I had placed funds, gave me several bills; among others this, addressed to Don Gregorio Peralta."

"That is my name, sir; be so kind as to hand it to me."

"As you see, sir, the bill is for twenty-three ounces."

"Very well, sir," replied Don Gregorio, as he took it, "allow me to examine it."

Don Pedro bowed in his turn, whilst Don Gregorio, approaching a flambeau, looked attentively at the bill of exchange, put it into his pocket, and took some money from his purse.

Here are the twenty-three ounces, sir," he said.

The spy took them, counted the gold pieces, examining them attentively, and then put them into his pocket.

"It is very singular, sir," he said, just as the two gentlemen thought they were about to be relieved of his presence.

"What is it?" asked Don Gregorio. "Do you not find the amount right?"

"Oh, pardon me, perfectly right; but," he added, with a slight hesitation, "I thought you had been a merchant?"

"And what leads you to think otherwise?"

"Because I see no desks."

"They are in another part of the house," Don Gregorio replied. "I am a private trader."

"Oh, very well, sir."

"And, if I had not thought you had pressing need of the money——"

"Very pressing!" the other interrupted.

"I should have begged you to call again to-morrow."

And thereupon he waved his hand, rather haughtily, as dismissing him. Don Pedro retired, visibly disappointed.

"That is a double-faced fellow, I am sure," said Don Gregorio. "I should not wonder if he were a spy of the general."

"Oh, I know him!" Don Tadeo replied. "I have about me proofs of his treachery. He has been a necessary instrument; at present he may injure us."

Don Gregorio drew from his pocket the bill which had been presented to him, and holding it to Don Tadeo—

"Look at this," he said.

This bill, payable at sight, appeared perfectly like others. It was drawn in the usual form: "*At sight, please pay,*" &c., &c.; but, in two or three places, the pen, too hard, no doubt, had spluttered and formed a certain number of little black spots, of which some were almost imperceptible. It appeared that these black spots had a meaning for the two men; for as soon as Don Tadeo had cast his eyes over the bill, he seized his cloak, and folded himself in it.

"It is Heaven that protects us," he said; "we must go thither without delay."

"That is my opinion, likewise," Don Gregorio replied, holding the bill to

the light, and burning it. The two men took each a long dagger and a brace of pistols, which they concealed under their clothes. They pulled the flaps of their hats over their faces, and, wrapping themselves up to the very eyes, they descended into the street.

They walked on for a long time, turning round at intervals to ascertain if they were followed, plunging by degrees into the lowest quarters of the city, and at length stopped at a house of mean appearance, from which issued the loud but not very melodious strains of music eminently national.

This house was a chingana, a name which has no equivalent in French or English. A Chilian chingana presents so eccentrically droll an appearance that it would defy the pencil of Callot.

Let the reader figure to himself a low room, with smoky walls, the floor of which is but beaten earth, and rendered filthy by the detritus left by the feet of incessantly arriving and departing visitors. In the centre of this den, lighted only by a smoky lamp called a candil, by which it is impossible to distinguish more than the shadows of the customers, are seated four men upon stools. Two of them are twanging wretched guitars, which have lost most of their strings, with the backs of their hands; the third plays the tambourine with his thumbs upon a crippled table, striking it with all his might; whilst the fourth rolls between his hands a piece of bamboo six feet long, split into several strips, which yield the most discordant sound that can possibly be imagined. The four musicians, not content with the formidable clatter made by their instruments, shout, at the very top of their voices, songs which we can neither venture to repeat nor translate.

Twice or thrice in the course of an evening, it may happen that some of the guests, more heated than the rest, or seized by the demon of jealousy, take it into their heads to quarrel. Then knives are drawn from the polena, ponchos are rolled round the left arm to serve as bucklers, the music ceases, and a circle is formed round the combatants. The sanguinary contest begins, and when one of the combatants has fallen, he is carried into the street, and the music is resumed.

It was in front of one of these establishments that the chief of the Dark Hearts and his friend had stopped. Pulling up the folds of their cloaks so as to completely conceal their faces, they entered. In spite of the pestilential atmosphere which nearly choked them, they passed unnoticed through the drinkers, and gained the further end of the room. The cellar-door stood ajar; they opened it softly, and disappeared down the steps. After descending ten of these, they found themselves in a cellar, where a man, leaning over a barrel, said, without interrupting his work—

“Would you like some aguardiente de pesco, some mescal, or some chica?”

“Neither the one nor the other,” Don Tadeo replied; “we wish for some French wine.”

The man sprang up as if moved by a spring. The two adventurers had put on their masks.

“Do you wish to have it white or red?” the man asked.

“Red—as red as blood,” said Don Tadeo.

“Of what year?” the unknown rejoined.

“Of that vintaged on the 5th of April, 1817.”

“Then you must come this way, gentlemen,” the man replied, with a respectful bow; “the wine you do me the honour to call for is extremely valuable; it is kept in a separate cellar.”

“To be drunk at Martinmas,” Don Tadeo remarked.

The man, who seemed only to wait for this last reply to his question, smiled with an air of intelligence, and laid his hand lightly on the wall. A stone turned slowly round upon itself, without the least noise, and opened a passage to the conspirators, which they immediately entered, and the stone returned to its place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW TO COOK AN EGG.

ABANDONING for a time Don Tadeo and his friend, we will request the reader to follow us back to the tribe of the Great Hare. The looked-for morrow was a great day for the tribe, a day expected with impatience by all housekeepers, who were about to learn how to discover, to use Valentine's word, a new dish. As soon as it was daylight, men, women, and children assembled on the great square of the village, and formed numerous groups, in which the merit of the unknown dish about to be revealed to them was discussed.

The Parisian was already at his post, standing in an open spot, in the middle of the square, watching with a laughing eye the anxious or incredulous expression by turn displayed upon the Indian faces. A table, which was to serve for his culinary preparations, a lighted brasier, upon which boiled an iron pot filled with water, a kitchen-knife, an enormous frying-pan, found I know not where, a sort of tub, a wooden spoon, some parsley, a bit of bacon, some salt, some pepper, and a basket full of fresh eggs, had been prepared at his desire.

All eagerly looked for the arrival of the apo-ulmen of the tribe, with which the exhibition was to commence. A kind of dais had been erected for him in front of the operator, and when he had taken his lighted calumet, he bent a little on one side, and whispered a few words in the ear of Curumilla, who stood respectfully beside him. The ulmen bowed, came down from the dais, went straight to the Parisian to tell him he might begin, and then resumed his post.

Valentine returned the salutation of this master of the ceremonies, took off his poncho, which he folded up and laid carefully at his feet, and turning up his sleeves above his elbows with the studied grace of a performer, he leant slightly forward, placed his right hand upon the table, and, assuming the tone of a vendor of quack medicines who boasts of the efficacy of his nostrums to gaping clowns, he thus commenced his demonstration in a loud voice and with a perfectly clear utterance—

"Illustrious ulmens, and you redoubtable warriors. In the beginning of time the world did not exist; water and clouds, which continually clashed against each other in space, then formed the universe. When Pillian created the world, as soon as at his voice man had issued from the bosom of the red mountain, he took him by the hand, and, pointing to all the productions of the earth, the air, and the water, he said to him—'Thou art the king of creation: consequently, animals, plants, and fishes all belong to thee, and are, each in proportion with its strength, instincts, or conformation, to minister to thy welfare and thy happiness in the world in which I have placed thee; thus the horse shall bear thee with fiery speed across the deserts; fleecy llamas and sheep clothe thee with their wool, and nourish thee with their succulent flesh.' When Pillian had analysed, one after the other, the divers qualities of the animals, before proceeding to the plants and fishes, he stopped at the hen. Pillian took

her by the wings, and showing her to man, said—'Here is one of the most useful animals I have created for thy service; boiled in a pot, the hen will afford thee an excellent broth; roasted, its white flesh will acquire a delicious flavour; of her eggs thou canst make omelettes with herbs, omelettes with mushrooms, omelettes with ham, and, above all others, with bacon. If thou art indisposed, and solid food should be too heavy for thy weak stomach, thou canst boil her eggs in the shell, and then thou wilt say something, indeed!'

"Without further prelude, I am going to have the honour of producing before you a boiled egg! Listen to me; it is as simple as saying good day. In order to enjoy a boiled egg, two things are necessary—in the first place, an egg, and then some boiling water! You take the egg in your fingers thus, you uncover your saucepan, you place the egg in a spoon, and deposit it carefully in a saucepan, where you allow it to boil gently three minutes. Mind, three minutes, neither more nor less: pay attention. There it is!"

The action suited the word; the three minutes were past. Valentine took out the egg, beheaded it, sprinkled a little salt on it, and presented it to the ulmen with some long strips of maize bread. All this was performed with the most imperturbable seriousness, amidst the profound silence of the attentive crowd.

The apo-ulmen proceeded to taste this wonderful egg with the most deliberate gravity.

"Wah! it is good! very good!" he cried.

Valentine returned to his brasier with a modest smile, and set about boiling eggs, which he distributed among the ulmens and principal warriors, who quickly mingled their felicitations with those of the apo-ulmen.

From that moment the Indians were believers—the most incredulous were convinced, and all awaited with impatience the continuation of his experiments.

"Listen to me!" he continued, striking a sharp blow on the table with the knife he held in his hand; "listen to me, but, above all, observe closely how I proceed. A boiled egg was child's play to me, but the omelette requires to be considered seriously, and executed with care, in order to obtain that finish, that smoothness, flavour, and perfection so much prized by real judges. I am about to make a bacon-omelette, and when I name that, I name the most exquisite dish in the world! To make a bacon-omelette, I must have bacon, eggs, salt, pepper, parsley, and some butter—there they are, as you see, all on that table. Now I will mix them."

Then he commenced a monster bacon-omelette, of at least sixty eggs, while continuing his explanation with inexpressible freedom and copiousness. The interest of the Indians was warmly excited, their enthusiasm betraying itself by shouts, leaps, and laughter; but it was carried to its height, and the stamping, crying, and screaming became terrific, when the Puelches saw Valentine seize the long handle of the frying-pan with a firm grasp, and toss the omelette three different times into the air, without any apparent effort, and with the style and ease of a finished cook. When the omelette was done, the Frenchman placed it upon a dish, taking care to double it with the talent which *cordons bleus* alone possess, and was then preparing to carry it smoking to the apo-ulmen, but he, enticed by the flavour of the boiled egg, and with appetite excited to the highest pitch, spared him that trouble; for he forgot all decorum, and rushed towards the table, followed by the principal ulmens of the tribe. The success of the Parisian was enormous. Never, in the history of the divine art, did a cook obtain such a glorious triumph! Valentine, with the modesty peculiar to man of real talent, stole away from the honours they wished to pay him.

On the morrow of this eventful day, at the moment when the young men were about to leave the quarters they inhabited in common, their host presented himself, followed by Curumilla. The two chiefs saluted them, sat down upon the beaten earth which served instead of flooring, and lit their pipes.

"Are my pale brothers still resolved to leave us?"

"Yes," replied Louis.

"Has Indian hospitality been wanting towards them?"

"So far from that, chief," the young man said, "you have treated us like children of your own tribe."

"Then why leave us?" Trangoil-Lanec asked; "we know not what we lose."

"You are right, chief; but you know we came into this country for the purpose of visiting Antinahuel," Louis observed.

"And does my golden-haired brother," for so he called Valentine, "absolutely wish to see him?"

"Absolutely," replied the young man.

"He shall see him," replied Trangoil-Lanec.

"Good!" said Valentine. "In that case we will set out to-morrow."

"My brothers shall not go alone."

"What do you mean by that?" Valentine asked.

"The Indian soil is not safe for pale-faces."

"My brother has preserved me a friend," said Curumilla; "I shall follow him."

"You cannot think of such a thing, chief," Valentine remarked. "We are travellers whom chance knocks about at its pleasure; we know not what destiny has in reserve for us, nor whither it will conduct us."

"What does it signify?" Curumilla replied; "where you go, we will go."

"Oh!" Louis exclaimed, warmly, "it is impossible! your friends, your wives, and your children!"

"Our wives and children will be taken care of."

"My friends, my good friends," said Valentine, with emotion, "you are wrong; we cannot impose such a sacrifice upon you."

"We will follow our pale brothers," Trangoil-Lanec said in a tone that admitted of no reply; "my brothers are not acquainted with the llanas; four men are a force in the desert—two men are dead."

The Frenchmen contested the matter no longer; they accepted the offer of the ulmens, and did so the more readily, because they plainly perceived what an immense advantage these men would be to them.

After repeated farewells to these worthy people, the four travellers directed their course towards the *tolderia* of the Black Serpents.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SUN TIGER.

In the state of anarchy in which Chili was plunged, parties were numerous, and every one was manœuvring as skilfully as possible to gain possession of power. General Bustamante aimed at nothing less than the protectorate of a confederation similar to that of the United States, which, then but little understood, dazzled his ambition.

The Dark Hearts, on their side, wished that the government should adopt

measures of a rather democratic nature, but they had no intention to overturn it for they were persuaded that a revolution could only be prejudicial to the nation. Besides General Bustamente and the society of the Dark Hearts, a third party, more powerful, perhaps, than the two first, was at work silently, but active. This party was represented by Antinahuel. We have said that from its geographical position this little insignificant republic is placed like a wedge in the Chilian territory, which it separates sharply in two. This position gave Antinahuel immense power.

He wanted a plausible pretext for keeping his Uta-Mapus under arms, without inspiring the Chilians with mistrust: and this pretext General Bustamente and the Dark Hearts supplied him with by their preparations. No one could be surprised, for this reason a time of peace at seeing in the toqui gather together a numerous army on the Chilian frontiers, since either party flattered itself that this army was destined to aid its cause. The conduct of the toqui was, therefore, most skilful; for he not only inspired mistrust in no one, but, on the contrary, gave hopes to all.

Things were at this point when Dona Maria came to the tolderia of the Black-Serpents, to visit the friend of her childhood. As soon as she awoke, the linda gave orders for her departure.

"Is my sister going to leave me already?" said Antinahuel, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Yes," Dona Maria replied; "my brother knows that I must reach Valdivia as quickly as possible."

The chief did not press her stay; a furtive smile played round his lips.

"Did not my brother say he should be soon in Valdivia?" she asked.

"I shall be there as soon as my sister," he replied.

"We shall see each other again, then?"

"Perhaps we may."

"We must!"

"Very well," the chief replied, after a moment's pause; "my sister may depart—she shall see me again."

"Till then, farewell, then," she said, and rode away.

She soon disappeared in a cloud of dust, and the chief returned thoughtfully to his toldo.

"Woman," he said, to his mother, "I am going to the great tolderia of the pale-faces."

"I heard everything last night," the Indian woman replied, sorrowfully; "my son is wrong."

"Wrong! how, or why?" he asked passionately.

"My son is a great chief; my sister deceives him, and makes him subservient to her vengeance. The young white girl has a right to the protection of my son."

"I will protect the Pearl of the Andes."

"My son forgets that she saved his life."

"Silence, woman!" he shouted, in a passionate tone.

The Indian woman held her peace, but signed deeply.

The chief summoned his warriors, and selecting from among them a score upon whom he could place reliance, ordered them to be ready to follow him within an hour. He then threw himself upon a bench, and sank into serious reflections. Suddenly a great noise was heard from without, and the chief sprang from his recumbent position. He was surprised to see two strangers, mounted upon excellent horses and preceded by an Indian, advancing towards him. These strangers were Valentine and Louis.

Valentine, on leaving the village of the Puelches, had opened the letter addressed to himself, and placed in his hands by the major-domo, with a recommendation not to open it till the last minute. The young man was far from expecting the contents of this strange missive.

"Here, read this, Louis," he said, "who knows but that this singular letter is the first step to our fortune?"

Like all men in love, Louis was sceptical upon every subject that did not bear some relation to his passion.

"Politics burn the fingers," he said.

"Yes, of those who don't know how to handle them," Valentine replied. "Now, it is my opinion that in this country, in which it has pleased fate to drop us, the most promising element of fortune, happens to be those very politics."

"I must confess, my friend, that I care very little for these Dark Hearts."

"I do not share your opinion at all; I believe them to be resolute, intelligent men."

"Much good may it do them! But of what consequence is that to us Frenchmen?"

"More than you may think for; and I am determined, immediately after my interview with this said Antinahuel, to go directly to Valdivia."

"As you please," said the count, carelessly. "As you wish it we will go thither! only I warn you that we shall risk our heads. But I wash my hands of the matter beforehand."

"I will be prudent, caramba! My head is the only thing I can call my own," Valentine replied, laughing, "and be assured I will not risk it for nothing."

"Well, it may be some interesting; we travel partly for instruction."

"Bravo! that's the way in which I like to hear a man speak."

Trangoil-Lanec and Curumilla were too prudent to venture to let Antinahuel know of the friendship which bound them to the two Frenchmen. Without suspecting the reasons which induced their friends to present themselves to the toqui, they foresaw that a day might come when it would be advantageous that their relations should be unknown.

The reception given to the Frenchmen was most friendly; for in time of peace the Araucanos are exceedingly hospitable. As soon as they perceived the strangers, they crowded round; and as all the Indians speak Spanish, Valentine had no difficulty in making himself understood. One warrior, more polite than the rest, took upon himself to be their guide through the village. He led them to the toldo of the chief, in front of which were drawn up twenty horsemen, armed, and apparently waiting.

"That is Antinahuel, the great toqui of the Inapire-Mepus," said the guide emphatically.

"Thank you," said Valentine; and the two Frenchmen advanced rapidly towards the toqui.

"Eh, eh!" Valentine said, in a subdued voice, to his companion; "here is a man with a good bearing."

"Yes," Louis replied, in the same tone, "but he has a contracted brow, a sinister look, and compressed lips."

"Bah!" said Valentine, "you are too difficult by half; did you expect to find an Apollo Belvedere?"

"No; but I should like a little more open frankness in his look."

"Well, well, we shall see."

"I do not know why, but that man produces the effect of a reptile upon me."

"Oh, nonsense! you are too impressionable. I dare say the man, who, I

cannot deny, has the air of a rascal, is, at bottom, one of the best fellows in the world."

"God grant I may be deceived! but I experience, on seeing him, a feeling for which I cannot account."

"All folly! What relations can you ever have with this individual? We are charged with a mission to him; who knows whether we may ever see him again?"

"You are right; and I do not know what makes me think as I have said."

The adventurers were at that moment in front of the chief's toldo. Antinahuel stood before them; and, although appearing to be giving orders, examined them attentively. He stepped towards them quickly, and said, in a pleasant tone—

"Strangers, you are welcome to my toldo. Your presence rejoices my heart."

"Thanks for the kind words of welcome you address to us, powerful chief," Valentine replied. "The persons who sent us to you assured us of the kind reception we might expect."

"If the strangers come on the part of my friends, that is a further reason why I should endeavour to make their abode here agreeable."

The two Frenchmen bowed, and alighted from their horses. At a sign from the toqui, two peons led the horses away.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MATRICIDE.

MANY of the richest Chilian farmers would have found it impossible to display greater luxury than the chief exhibited when his caprice or his interest led him to do so. On the present occasion, he was not sorry to show strangers that the Araucanos were not so barbarous as their arrogant neighbours wished it to be supposed. At the first glance, Antinahuel had discovered that his guests were not Spaniards; but, with the circumspection which forms the foundation of the Indian character, he confined his observation to his own breast.

The Frenchmen followed him in, and with a gesture he requested them to be seated. Peons placed a profusion of cigars and cigarettes upon the table. In a few minutes other peons entered with the mate. Then, without the silence being broken—for the Araucanian laws of hospitality require that no question should be addressed to strangers until they think proper to speak themselves—each sipped the herb of Paraguay while smoking.

"I thank you, chief, in the name of myself and my friend, for your cordial hospitality," began Valentine.

"Hospitality is a duty."

"But," replied Valentine, "as I have been given to understand that the chief is about to set out on a journey, I do not wish to detain him."

"I am at the orders of my guests; my journey is not so pressing as not to be put off for a few hours."

"I thank the chief for his courtesy, but I hope he will soon be at liberty."

Antinahuel bowed.

"I have a letter for the chief."

"Ah!" the toqui exclaimed, with a singular intonation.

"Yes," the Frenchman continued; "and that letter I am about to have the honour of handing to you."

And he put his hand to his breast to take out the letter.

"Stop!" said the chief, turning towards his servants, "leave the room." The three men were left alone.

"Now you may give me the necklace," he continued.

The chief took it, looked carefully at the superscription, turned the paper in all directions in his hand, and then, with some hesitation, presented it to the young man.

"Let my brother read it," he said; "the whites are more learned than we poor Indians."

Valentine gave his countenance the most silly expression possible.

"I cannot read this," he said.

"Does my brother then refuse to render me this service?" the chief pressed him.

"I do not refuse you, chief, only I am prevented doing what you request by a very simple reason."

"And what is that reason?"

"It is that my companion and I are both Frenchmen."

"Well, and what then?"

"We speak a little Spanish, but we cannot read it."

"Ah!" said the chief, in a tone of doubt.

"Hem! that is possible."

He then turned towards the two Frenchmen, who, on their part, were, in appearance, impassive and indifferent.

"Let my brothers wait an instant," he said; "I know a man in my tribe who understands the marks which the whites make upon paper."

"Why the devil did you refuse to read the letter?" Louis asked, after the chief left the apartment.

"In good truth," Valentine replied, "I can scarcely tell you why; but what you said of the expression of this man's countenance, produced a certain effect upon me. He inspires me with no confidence, and I am not anxious to be in the depository of his secrets."

"Yes, you are right! Hush! I hear footsteps."

And the chief re-entered the room.

"I know the contents of the letter," he said; "if my brothers see the man who charged them with it, they will inform him that I am setting out this very day for Valdivia."

"We would, with pleasure, take charge of that message," replied Valentine; "but we do not know the person who gave us the letter."

The chief darted at them a stolen and deeply suspicious glance.

"Good! will my brothers remain here then?"

"It would give us infinite pleasure to pass a few hours in the agreeable society of the chief, but with us time presses."

"My brothers are perfectly free; my toldo is open for those who leave it, as well as for those who enter it. In what direction are my brothers going?"

"We are bound for Concepcion."

"Let my brothers go in peace then! If their course lay towards Valdivia, I would have offered to journey with them."

"A thousand thanks, chief, for your kind offer; unfortunately we cannot profit by it."

The three men exchanged a few more words of courtesy and left the toldo.

The Frenchmen's horses had been brought round; they mounted, and, after having saluted the chief once more, they set off. As soon as they were out of the village, Louis, turning to Valentine, said—

"We have not an instant to lose. If we wish to reach Valdivia before that man, we must make all speed. Who knows whether Don Tadeo may not be waiting?"

They soon rejoined their friends, who looked for them anxiously, and all four set off at full speed in the direction of Valdivia. Antinahuel accompanied his guests a few paces out of his toldo. When he had taken leave of them, he followed them with his eyes as far as he could see them, and when they disappeared at the extremity of the village, he returned, saying to himself—

"It is evident to me that these men are deceiving me; their refusal to read the letter was nothing but a pretext."

When he arrived in front of his toldo, he found his mosotones mounted, and awaiting his orders.

"I must set out at once," he said; "I shall learn all yonder, and, perhaps," he added, in a low voice, "perhaps I shall find *her* again. If Dona Maria breaks her promise, and does not give her up to me, woe, woe be to her!"

He raised his head, and saw his mother standing before him. "What do you want, woman?" he asked.

"My place is near you when you are suffering, my son," she mildly replied.

"I suffering! You are mad, mother! age has turned your brain! Go back into the toldo, and, during my absence, keep a good watch over all that belongs to me."

"Are you, then, really going, my son?"

"This moment," he said, and sprang into his saddle.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"What is that to you?" he replied.

"Beware! my son; you are entering on a bad course. Guerubu, the spirit of evil, is master of your heart."

"I am the best and sole judge of my actions."

"You shall not go!" she exclaimed.

The Indians collected round the speakers looked on with mute terror; they were too well acquainted with the violent and imperious character of Antinahuel not to dread something fatal.

The brows of the chief lowered, his eyes gleamed like lightning, and it was not without a great effort that he mastered the passion boiling in his breast.

"I will go!" he said, trembling with rage; "I will go, if I trample you beneath my horse's hoofs!"

The woman clung convulsively to the saddle, and looked her son in the face.

"Do so," she cried; "for, by the soul of your father, I swear I will not stir, even if you pass over my body!"

The face of the Indian became horribly contracted; he cast around a glance which made the hearts of the bravest tremble with fear.

"Woman! woman!" he shouted, grinding his teeth with rage; "get out of my way!"

"I will not stir, I tell you!" she repeated.

"Take care! take care!" he said again; "I shall forget you are my mother!"

"I will not stir!"

A nervous tremor shook the limbs of the chief.

"If you will have it so," he cried, in a husky, but loud voice, "your blood be upon your own head!"

And he dug the spurs into the sides of his horse, which plunged with pain, and then sprung forward like an arrow, dragging along the poor woman, whose body was soon but one huge wound. A cry of horror burst from the quivering lips of the terrified Indians. After a few minutes of this senseless course, during which she had left fragments of her flesh on every sharp point of the road, the strength of the Indian woman abandoned her; she left her hold of the bridle, and sank dying.

"Oh!" she said, in a faint voice, and a look dimmed by agony, "my unhappy son! my unhappy——"

She raised her eyes towards heaven, clasped her mangled hands as if to offer up a last prayer, and fell back.

She died pitying the matricide, and pardoning him. The women of the tribe took up the body respectfully, and carried it, weeping, into the toldo. At the sight of the corpse, an old Indian shook his head.

"Antinahuel has killed his mother! Pi lian will avenge her!"

And all bowed down their heads sorrowfully.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE JUSTICE OF THE DARK HEARTS.

DON TADEO and his friend Don Gregorio were introduced into a subterranean apartment, the entrance to which was concealed in the wall. The door closed immediately after them; the two men turned round sharply, but all signs of an opening had disappeared. The place was admirably chosen for a meeting of conspirators. It was an immense apartment, which must have served for a long time as a cellar, as was made evident by the essentially alcoholic emanations still floating in the air; the walls were low and thick, and of a dirty red colour; a lamp with three jets, hanging from the roof, far from dispersing the darkness, seemed only to render it in a manner visible. In a recess stood a table, behind which a man in a mask was seated near to two empty seats. Men enveloped in cloaks, and all wearing black velvet masks, were gliding about in the darkness.

Don Tadeo and his friend exchanged a glance, and, without speaking a word, proceeded to take their places. As soon as they were seated, a change came over the meeting: the low whispering which had been heard till that moment ceased. All the conspirators gathered in a single group in front of the table, and with arms crossed upon their chests, waited. The man who before the arrival of Don Tadeo had appeared to preside over the meeting arose, and said—

"On this day the seventy-two *ventas* of the Dark Hearts, spread over all the territories of the republic, are assembled in council. In all of them the taking up of arms will be decreed. Everywhere men, faithful to the good cause, are preparing to commence the struggle with Bustamente. Will you all, comrades, who are here present, when the hour strikes, descend frankly and boldly into the arena? Answer," he resumed; "what will you do?"

"We will die!" the band of conspirators murmured.

"That is well, my brothers," Don Tadeo said, rising. "I expected no less from you. I have long known you all, and felt that I could depend upon you—I, whom

none of you know. These masks which conceal you from one another, are but transparent gauze for the King of Darkness! I have sworn that you shall live as free men, or that I will die! Before twenty-four hours have passed away, you will hear the signal you have so long waited for, and then will commence that terrible struggle which can only end in the death of the tyrant. Let the chiefs of sections draw near."

Ten men left the ranks, and placed themselves silently ten paces from the table.

"Let the corporal of sections answer for all," said Don Tadeo.

"I am the corporal," said one of the men; "the orders expedited from the Quinta Verde have been executed; all the sections are warned."

"So far well! How many men have you at your disposal?"

"Seven thousand three hundred and seventy-seven."

"That is well! we have even more than we want. Return to your places."

The chiefs of sections drew back.

"Now," Don Tadeo continued, "before we separate, I have to call down your justice upon one of our brothers, who, having entered deeply into our secrets, has been false to the society several times for a little gold. The circumstances are of the utmost importance; one word—a single word—may ruin our cause and us! What chastisement does this man deserve?"

"Death!" the conspirators responded, coolly.

"I know this man," Don Tadeo continued; "let him come forth from the ranks."

No one stirred.

"This man is here—I can see him; for the last time, let him step forth."

The conspirators cast suspicious glances at each other; the assembly seemed moved by an extreme anxiety; the man, however, upon whom the King of Darkness called, persisted in remaining silent.

Don Tadeo waited for an instant, and then made a signal. Don Gregorio rose and advanced towards the group of conspirators, which opened at his approach, and laid his hand roughly on the shoulder of a man who had instinctively retreated before him.

"Come with me, Don Pedro," he said, and he dragged rather than led him to the table.

The guilty spy was seized with a convulsive trembling, his teeth chattered, and he fell upon his knees.

"Mercy, my lord, mercy!"

Don Gregorio tore off his mask, and revealed the face of the spy.

"Don Pedro," Don Tadeo said, in a stern voice, "you have several times sought to sell your brothers; it was you who caused the death of the ten patriots upon the place of Santiago; it was you who betrayed the secret of the Quinta Verde to Bustamente; this very day, you held a long conversation with General Bustamente, in which you agreed to deliver up to him to-morrow the principal chiefs of the Dark Hearts."

The miserable wretch had not a word to say in his defence.

"Is this true?" Don Tadeo reiterated.

"It is true," he murmured.

"You acknowledge yourself guilty?"

"Yes," he said, with a heart-stifling sob; "but grant my life, noble seigneur, and I swear——"

"Silence!"

The spy was struck with mute despair.

"You have heard, companions and friends; what punishment does he deserve for having sold his brothers?"

"Death!" replied the Dark Hearts.

"In the name of the Dark Hearts, of whom I am king, I condemn you, Don Pedro Saldillo, to death, for treachery and felony towards your brethren. You have five minutes to make your peace with Heaven."

He placed his watch upon the table, and drawing a pistol from his belt, cocked it deliberately. The sharp noise of the hammer made the condemned man shudder with fear. The spy cast around wild, despairing glances, but beheld nothing but angry eyes gleaming upon him through hideous masks.

"The five minutes are past," said Don Tadeo, in a firm voice.

"A few minutes more! a few minutes, my lord!" the spy implored, wringing his hands in despair. "I am not prepared; you cannot kill me thus!"

Without appearing to hear him, Don Tadeo lifted his pistol, and the miserable culprit rolled upon the ground.

"Oh!" he cried, as the pistol was aimed, "be accursed, ye assassins!"

The conspirators stood cold, impassive spectators of the scene. As soon as the stern act of justice was completed, at a signal from the chief, several men opened a trap in the floor which covered a hole half filled with quick lime; the body was thrown into it.

"Justice has been done, brothers," said Don Tadeo, solemnly; "go in peace, the King of Darkness watches over you."

The conspirators bowed respectfully, and disappeared, one after the other, without uttering a word.

"Oh!" said Don Tadeo, "shall we always have thus to combat treachery?"

"Courage! my friend; you have yourself said, in a few hours war will commence in the face of day."

"God grant I may not be deceived."

The two conspirators regained the chingana, in which the dancing, laughing, and drinking were going on with undiminished spirit; they passed through so as not to be observed, and came out into the street. They had hardly walked fifty steps when they were joined by a man, who proved to be Valentine Guillois.

"God be praised for bringing you here so opportunely!" said Don Tadeo.

"I hope I am punctual," the Parisian remarked, with a gay laugh.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TREATY OF PEACE.

GENERAL BUSTAMANTE had come to Valdivia under the pretence of renewing the treaties which existed between the republic of Chili and the Araucanian Confederation. This pretext was excellent in the sense that it permitted him to concentrate a considerable force in the provinces, and gave him, besides, a plausible reason for receiving the most powerful Ulmens of the Indians, who would not fail to come to the meeting.

This ceremony generally takes place in a vast plain situated upon the Araucanian territories. By a curious coincidence, the pretext of the general suited equally well the interests of the three factions. The Dark Hearts had skilfully profited by it to prepare the resistance they meditated, and Antinahuel, feigning to wish to pay the greatest honours to the war minister of the president of the republic, had collected a real army of his best warriors.

The plain on which the ceremony was to take place was vast, covered with high grass, and belted by mountains verdant with lofty trees. The plain crossed by

woods and lines of apple-trees, loaded with fruit, was divided in two by a meandering river, which flowed gently along.

The sun was rising majestically in the horizon when a measured noise of tinkling bells proceeded from a wood of apple-trees, and a troop of half a score mules, led by the mother mare, debouched into the plain. These mules carried divers objects for an encampment, provisions, and even some bales of clothes and linen. At twenty paces behind the mules, came a rather numerous troop of horsemen.

This party were Don Tadeo, his friends the Frenchman, the Indian Ulmens, with Dona Rosario, and three servants. By a strange coincidence, at the same time that they were arranging their camp, another party nearly as numerous established theirs on the opposite bank of the river. The leader of this was Dona Maria. As frequently happens, it had pleased chance to bring into propinquity irreconcilable enemies.

Don Tadeo had no suspicion of this dangerous proximity, or he would probably have done everything in his power to avoid it. He had cast a vacant glance at the caravan opposite to him, without taking any further heed of it. Dona Maria, on the contrary, knew perfectly well what she was about, and had placed herself where she was with the skill of an able tactician.

The Puelches, who had descended from their mountains in great numbers, had passed the night in making joyous libations around their camp-fires; many of them were sleeping in a state of complete intoxication; nevertheless, as soon as the arrival of the minister of the Chilian republic was announced, they all sprang up and began to dance. On one side arrived General Bustamente at a canter, surrounded by a brilliant staff, all glittering with gold lace, and followed by a numerous troop of lancers; whilst on the other side came, at a gallop, the four Araucano Toquis, followed by the principal Ulmens, and a great number of mosotones.

These two troops, which hastened to meet each other amidst the *vivas* and cries of joy of the crowd, raised immense clouds of dust. The Araucanos in particular, who are excellent horsemen, indulged in equestrian eccentricities, of which the so-much vaunted Arab fantasias can give but a faint idea.

As soon as the two troops met, the chiefs dismounted and ranged themselves, the Ulmens, armed with their long silver-headed canes, behind Antinahuel, and the three other Toquis and the Chilians behind General Bustamente. It was the first time the Tiger Sun and the general had met.

After exchanging a few salutes, impressed with a rather suspicious cordiality, the two bands retrograded from each other a few paces, to afford room for the commissary-general and four Capitanos de Amigos. These officers are what they call in the United States Indian agents; they serve as interpreters and agents to the Araucanos for trade. It must be observed that all these Indians speak Spanish perfectly well; but they never will use it in meetings. These Capitanos de Amigos are much beloved and respected. They arrived, leading a score of mules loaded with presents, destined by the President of the Republic for the Ulmens. For, be it noted, when Indians treat with Christians, they consider nothing settled till they have received presents. The Chilians, who had long been accustomed to Araucanian habits, had taken good care not to forget this important condition.

While the commissary-general was distributing the presents, General Bustamente repaired to a chapel where a priest celebrated mass. After mass, the speeches commenced. These speeches, which were very long, resulted in mutual assurances that they were satisfied with the peace which reigned between the two peoples, and that they would do all in their power to maintain it as long as possible.

"Now," said the general, "if my brothers, the great chiefs, will follow me, we will plant the cross."

"No," Antinahuel replied, with a honied smile, "the cross must not be planted in front of the toloa."

"Why not?" the general asked, with astonishment.

"Because," the Indian replied, "the words we have exchanged must remain buried where they have been pronounced."

"That is just!" said the general, bowing his head in sign of assent. "It shall be done."

Antinahuel smiled proudly.

The Indian peons then went to fetch from the chapel, upon the floor of which it lay, a cross of at least thirty feet in height. All the chiefs and the Chilean officers ranged themselves around it; the troops forming a vast circle at a respectful distance. After the pause of an instant, of which the priest took advantage to bless the cross, it was planted in the ground. At the moment it was about to gain its upright position, Antinahuel interposed.

"Stop!" he said. "Peace is well assured between us, is it not?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly," the general replied.

"All our words are buried under this cross?"

"All of them."

"Cover them with earth then," he said to the peons.

When this ceremony was accomplished, Antinahuel caused a young lamb to be brought, which the machi slaughtered. All the Indian chiefs bathed their hands in the still warm blood of the quivering animal, and daubed the cross with hieroglyphic signs. In conclusion, the Araucans and Chileans discharged their fire-arms in the air, and the ceremony was ended. General Bustamente then coming, passed his arm through the chief's in a friendly manner, saying in an ingratiating tone—

"Will not my brother, Antinahuel, come for an instant in my tent, to taste a glass of aguardiente de Pisco and take mate?—he would render his friend happy."

"Why should I not?" the chief replied, smiling.

"My brother will accompany me!"

"Lead on, then."

Both moved off, chatting upon indifferent subjects, directing their course towards the general's tent, which had been pitched within gun-shot of the place where the ceremony had taken place.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ABDUCTION.

WHILE the ceremony we have described was being accomplished, a terrible event was passing not far from it. The three parties which divided Chili, and aimed at governing it, had, as if of one accord, chosen the day for the renewal of the treaty to throw off the mask and give their partisans the signal of revolt. Don Tadeo, who feared everything from Dona Maria and the general's spies, had consented, but with regret, that Rosario should accompany him to the plain, to be present at the ceremony.

Dona Rosario, to tell the truth, had only consulted her love in the request she had made to her guardian; the desire of seeing, unobserved, for a few hours, the object of her affections, had dictated it. Don Tadeo, who could not on any account be present at the ceremony, being obliged to conceal himself, took the two young Frenchmen aside as soon as his little encampment was arranged. It was then about seven o'clock in the morning, and the crowd began to flock to the plain. The King of Darkness cast a prudent and searching look around.

"Caballeros," he said, "since I have had the honour of knowing you, I have con-

cealed nothing from you, and you know all my secrets. I must now leave this spot instantly, and return to Valdivia. It is in that city that the first blow will be struck within a few hours, against the tyrant. I am not willing to expose the young lady whom you know to chance. I confide the care of her to one of you, the other will accompany me. In the event of any mischance happening to me, I will place in his hands a paper, which will inform you both of my intentions. Which of you, gentlemen, will take charge of Dona Rosario during my absence?"

"Be at ease, Don Tadeo, go where your duty calls you," Louis answered; "I swear that while I live no danger, either near or distant, shall assail her; to reach her it must pass over my dead body."

"Receive my warmest thanks, Don Louis," the Dark Heart replied, affected by the manner of the Frenchman; "I place implicit faith in your words."

"I will watch over her," the young man said, quietly.

"Once again I thank you."

Don Tadeo left the young men, and returned to the tent where Dona Rosario, reclining in a hammock, was gently swinging herself, and indulging in perhaps pleasing reveries.

"Do not disturb yourself, my child," said Don Tadeo; "I have but two words to say to you."

"I am always attentive to you, my kind friend."

"I have come to bid you farewell."

"Farewell, Don Tadeo!" she exclaimed, in great terror.

"Oh! comfort yourself, darling! only for a few hours."

"Ah! that is all!" she said, with a smile.

"Certainly, all! There is in this neighbourhood an exceedingly curious grotto. I was foolish enough to let some words slip concerning it this morning before Don Valentine, and that demon of a Frenchman insists upon my showing it to him."

"You have done quite right," she said, eagerly; "we are under great obligations to those two Frenchmen."

"That it would have been uncourteous on my part to refuse him," Don Tadeo interrupted, "therefore I have not. We shall set off directly. Be as cheerful as you can during our absence, dear child."

"I will endeavour," she said, absently.

"Besides, I shall leave Don Louis to take care of you."

The young girl blushed as she stammered—"Come back soon, dear friend."

"Time to go and return, that is all; adieu, then, darling."

Don Tadeo left the tent, and rejoined the young men.

"Adieu, Don Louis!" he said. "Are you ready, Don Valentine?"

"Ready!" the Frenchman replied, laughing; "Caramba! I should be in despair at losing such an opportunity of judging whether you understand getting up revolutions as well as we Frenchmen do."

"Oh! we are but young at the work yet," Don Tadeo remarked.

"Good-bye, Louis, for a time," said Valentine, pressing his friend's hand; and stooping towards his ear, he added—"Be thankful to your stars."

The young man only replied by shaking his head and sighing deeply. A peon had brought the horses for the two Chilians and the Frenchman. They set off at a quick pace, and were quickly lost in the high grass. Louis returned pensively to the camp, where he found Dona Rosario alone in her tent; the two Indian chiefs having gone in the direction of the chapel, where, mingled with the crowd, they might be present at the ceremony.

The young girl was seated on a heap of dyed sheepskins in front of the tent, dreamily looking out. Dona Rosario was a charming girl of sixteen, slender, fragile, and delicate, and small in person. Of a rare kind of beauty in America

she was fair ; her long silky hair was of the colour of ripe golden corn ; her blue eyes, in which were reflected the azure of the heavens, had that melancholy, dreamy expression which we attribute only to angels, and young girls who are beginning to love ; her nose, with its pinky nostrils, was inclined to be aquiline ; while her mouth, rather stern in expression, with rosy lips set off by teeth of dazzling whiteness, and her skin of pearl-like purity, altogether made her a charming creature.

The noise of the approaching young man's steps roused her from her reverie. She turned her head in the direction, and look at him with inexpressible sadness, although a faint smile played upon her lips.

"It is I," said the count.

"I knew of your coming," she replied, in a sweetly-toned voice. "Oh ! why did you return to me at all ?"

"Be not angry with me. I endeavoured to obey you ; but destiny has decided otherwise."

She gave him a long and eloquent look.

"Unfortunately," he continued, "you are condemned for some hours to endure my presence."

"I must resign myself to it," she said.

The young man imprinted a burning kiss upon the white soft hand he held.

"And so we are left alone !" she said gaily.

"Good heavens ! yes, nearly so," he replied. "The Indian chiefs and the peons, overcome by curiosity, have joined the crowds."

"We are alone, in the midst of ten thousand people !" she said, smiling.

"That is all the better ; every one is engaged with his own affairs, without troubling himself about those of others ; and we can speak to each other without fear."

"True," she said, thoughtfully, "it is frequently amidst a crowd that we find the greatest solitude."

"Does not the heart possess that great faculty of being able to isolate itself when it pleases ?"

"And is not that faculty often a misfortune ?"

"Perhaps it is," he replied, with a sigh.

"But how comes it ?" she said. "Pardon my giddy impertinence ! how comes it, I say, that you, of whom I sometimes caught a glimpse at Paris, during my short sojourn there, and who then enjoyed, if I was not mistaken, a brilliant position, should meet me here ?"

"Alas ! my history is that of many, and may be summed up in two words—weakness and ignorance."

"That is but too true ; that is the history of nearly all the world, in Europe as well as in America."

At this moment a great noise reached them from the camp. Dona Rosario and the count were placed so as not to be able to see what was passing in the plain.

"What is that noise ?" she asked.

"Probably the tumult of the festival."

"To what purpose ? Those cries and that tumult terrify me."

"And yet I thought it was you who asked Don Tadeo to see this."

"A silly girl's caprice," she said.

"But was it not Don Tadeo's intention to——"

"Who can tell Don Tadeo's intention ?" she interrupted, with a sigh.

"He appears to love you tenderly ?" Louis hazarded.

"Sometimes I am on the point of believing so ; he pays me the most

delicate attentions, shows me the tenderest care ; then at other times he appears to endure me with pain."

" Singular conduct ! " the count observed ; " this gentleman is your relation, there can be no doubt."

" I do not know," she replied ingenuously ; " when alone and pensive, my thoughts stray back to my early years. I have some vague remembrance of a young and handsome woman, whose black eyes smiled upon me constantly, and whose rosy lips lavished affectionate kisses upon me ; but as far back as I can recollect, I find nobody but Don Tadeo watching over me, everywhere and always."

" Perhaps, then," said the count, " he is your father."

" Listen. One day, after a long and dangerous illness, and in which Don Tadeo had night and day watched over my pillow for more than a month, happy at seeing me restored to life, for he had been fearful he should lose me, he smiled upon me tenderly, kissed my brow and my hands, and appeared to experience the most lively joy. ' Oh ! ' I said, as a sudden thought rushed across my mind ; ' oh ! you are my father ! none but a father could devote himself with such abnegation for his child.' Don Tadeo arose, his countenance was lividly pale, his features were frightfully contracted. ' Your father ! I ? Dona Rosario,' he cried, in a husky voice, ' you are a silly, poor child ! Never repeat those words again ; your father is dead, and your mother likewise. I am not your father—never repeat that word—I am only your friend.' "

A silence ensued ; the two young people were pensively thoughtful : the simple and touching recital of Don Rosario had strongly affected the count. At length he said, in a tremulous voice—

" Let me love you, Dona Rosario."

The maiden sighed.

" To what could that love lead, Don Louis ? " she said sadly, " to death, perhaps."

" Oh ! " he exclaimed madly ; " and it would be welcome, if it came in your defence."

At this very instant, several individuals rushed into the tent. Quick as thought, the count threw himself before the young girl, a pistol in each hand. But, as if Heaven had decreed that he should accomplish the wish he had just uttered, before he had time to defend himself he was struck to the earth. In falling, he saw, as if in a dream, Dona Rosario seized by two individuals, who fled away with her. With an incredible effort, the young man succeeded in getting on his knees. He beheld the ravishers hastening towards their horses. He took aim at the flying wretches, crying with a faint voice, " Murder ! murder ! " and fired.

One of the ravishers fell, uttering an imprecation of rage. The count, exhausted by the superhuman effort he had made, staggered like a drunken man ; the blood gushed from his ears, his sight grew dim, and he rolled senseless upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PROTEST.

THE three travellers returned with such speed to Valdivia, that it scarcely took them an hour-and-a-half to traverse the distance which divided the plain from

the city. They passed on their way General Don Pancho Bustamente, at the head of a detachment of lanceros, and attended by a numerous staff; but the Dark Hearts, employing their usual precautions, escaped notice.

"Look," said Don Tadeo, "at our worthy general; he fancies himself already protector."

"Yes," said Don Gregorio, "but between the cup and the lip he may find there is a mischance."

It was striking ten as they entered Valdivia. The city was almost deserted; for all who were not detained at home by urgent business had gone to the plain.

But Valdivia was at this moment oppressed by the weight of an unknown apprehension. The few citizens who remained in the city hastened to regain their homes. Numerous patrols of cavalry and infantry traversed the streets in all directions: cannon rolled along with portentous noise, and were planted at the corners of all the principal places. At the cabildo a crowd of officers and soldiers went in and out with a busy air; couriers succeeded each other unceasingly, and after having delivered the orders with which they were charged, set off again at full speed.

At the same time, at the corners of streets, men, wrapped in large cloaks, and with hats pulled down over their eyes, harangued the workmen and the sailors of the port. In these groups, arms, gunbarrels, bayonets, and pike-heads began to glitter in the sun. When these mysterious men were satisfied that they had accomplished their task in one place, they went to another. Immediately after their departure, as if by magic, barricades were raised behind them, and impeded the passage. As soon as a barricade was terminated, an energetic-looking sentinel, a workman with bare arms, but with a callous hand, brandishing a gun, an axe, or a sabre, placed himself at its summit, and bade all who approached go another way.

On entering the city, Don Tadeo and his companions found themselves completely barricaded. Don Tadeo smiled. The three men cleared the barricades, which were thrown open at their approach, and the sentinels bowed to them as they passed. We have forgotten to say that all three were masked. If now and then a stray citizen ventured to ask timidly who those three masked men were, he received for answer, "It is the King of Darkness and his lieutenants;" and the citizen, trembling with fear, crossed himself, and went his way hastily.

The three men thus arrived at the entrance of the Plaza Mayor. There two pieces of mounted cannon barred their passage, and the artillerymen were at their guns waiting, match in hand. At a sign from Don Tadeo, the officer who commanded approached him. He leant down upon the neck of his horse and said a few words in a whisper; the latter bowed, and, turning to his soldiers, said—

"Let these gentlemen pass."

It was towards the fountain in the centre of the Plaza Mayor that Don Tadeo conducted his companions. A hundred individuals, scattered here and there, and who appeared to expect him, drew together at his approach.

"Well," Don Tadeo asked Valentine, "how do you like our ride?"

"Delightful," the other replied, "only I fancy we shall shortly come to blows."

"I hope so," said the conspirator, coolly.

"Ah! ah!" the young man remarked, "all is for the best, then?"

"You are about to be present at an interesting spectacle."

The individuals assembled near the fountain surrounded them with every mark of the profoundest respect.

"Gentlemen," said Don Tadeo, "the struggle is about to commence. I desire at length that you should know me."

And he threw off his mask. A burst of enthusiasm broke from the ranks of the conspirators. "Don Tadeo de Leon!" they cried with astonishment, mingled with a species of veneration.

"Yes, gentlemen," Don Tadeo replied, "the man whom the creatures of the tyrant condemned to death, and whom God has miraculously preserved."

All the conspirators pressed tumultuously round him.

"Is every one at his post?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Are arms and ammunition distributed?"

"To everybody."

"Are all the barricades completed?"

"All."

"That is well. Now wait."

And quiet was re-established.

All these men had known Don Tadeo for a long time; they appreciated his character at its true value; they had already vowed to him a boundless friendship; and now they knew that Don Tadeo and the King of Darkness were the same person, they were ready to lay down their lives for him.

"Attention!" Don Tadeo commanded, as a regiment of infantry formed.

"Eh! eh!" Valentine murmured, with that mocking short laugh that was peculiar to him; "this is going on capitally! Caiamba! we shall soon have some fun!"

The gates of the cabildo were thrown open, and a general, followed by a brilliant staff, took his station on the top step of the great staircase; next several senators made their appearance in full costume, and formed a group around him. At a signal from the general, the drums beat for a time. When all was quiet, a senator, who held a roll of paper in his hand, came forward a few steps.

"Bah!" said the general, seizing his arm, "why lose your time in reading that rubbish?"

The senator, who asked no better than to be freed from the dangerous commission with which, very much against his will, he had been charged, rolled up his papers. The general assumed a commanding posture, placed his hand upon his hip, with the point of his sword on the ground, and said in a voice audible in every corner of the place—

"People of the province of Valdivia, the sovereign senate, assembled in congress at Santiago de Chili, has unanimously passed the following resolutions:—

"1st. The various provinces of the Chilian republic shall be composed of independent states united under the title of the Confederation of the United States of South America.

"2nd. The valiant and most excellent general, Don Pancho Bustamente, has been elected Protector of the Chilian Confederation."

"Long live the Protector!"

The officers grouped round the general, and the soldiers drawn up in the place shouted—

"Long live the Protector!"

But the people were mute.

"Hum!" the general murmured to himself, "they do not display much enthusiasm."

A man came forward from the group collected round the fountain, and

advanced boldly to within twenty paces of the soldiers. This man was Don Tadeo de Leon; his countenance was calm.

"What is your will?" the general shouted.

"To reply to your proclamation."

"Speak, I hear you," the general replied.

Don Tadeo bowed with a significant smile.

"In the name of the Chillan people," he said, "the senate of Santiago, composed of creatures sold to the tyrant, is declared traitorous to its country."

"Miserable fellow! what do you dare to say?"

"No insults, if you please. Allow me to terminate the answer I have to give you," Don Tadeo replied.

The general, involuntarily brow-beaten by the heroic courage of this man, who, alone, unarmed before a triple row of muskets, had dared to speak in this loud firm tone, bit the pommel of his sword with rage.

"In the name of the people," Don Tadeo, still calm and stoical, continued, "Don Pancho Bustamente is declared as a traitor to his country. Liberty! Chili!"

"Liberty! Chili!" the populace assembled on the square shouted with the greatest enthusiasm.

"Oh, this is too audacious," the general cried, pale with anger. "Soldiers, seize that rebel!"

Several soldiers stepped forward; but quicker than thought, Don Gregorio and Valentine had sprung to Don Tadeo's side, and dragged him back.

"Cordieu!" cried Valentine, pressing his hands enough to crush them, "you are a troublesome man."

"In the name of the Protector," said the general, "I command that rebel to be given up!"

Hisses and hootings were the only reply.

"Fire!" the general commanded. The muskets were lowered, and a formidable discharge pealed like thunder. Several men fell, killed or wounded.

"Chili! Liberty! down with the oppressor!" the people shouted, arming themselves with everything they could lay their hands on. A second discharge resounded, followed closely by a third. The ground was in an instant strewn with the dead and dying; but the patriots showed no disposition to disperse; on the contrary, under the incessant fire of the soldiers, they organised a resistance, and soon replied by shots to the platoon firing. The combat became mutual; the revolution had commenced.

"Hum!" the general muttered to himself, "I have undertaken a rather awkward mission."

CHAPTER XXX.

SPANIARD AND INDIAN.

It was not through fear that General Bustamente had absented himself from Valdivia at the moment when one of his lieutenants so boldly proclaimed him from the top of the steps of the cabildo, before the populace. No, General Bustamente was one of those soldiers of fortune of whom so many are found in America, accustomed to set his life upon the cast of the die. He had hoped, by the means of the forces he had concentrated in this remote province of the

Republic, that the inhabitants, taken unawares, would only offer an insignificant resistance.

Unfortunately for General Bustamante, the Dark Hearts had got wind of this project, and had countermined it by taking advantage of the opportunity offered them to unmask their own batteries. We have seen under what conditions the struggle commenced. The general, ignorant of what was passing, felt in a state of perfect security. As soon as he was in his tent, he let fall the curtain which closed it behind them; and, by a gesture, invited the toqui to be seated.

"Sit down, chief," he said.

"I am at the orders of my white brother," the Indian replied, with a bow.

The general attentively examined the man before him; he endeavoured to read on his countenance the various feelings that acted upon him.

"Let us speak frankly, loyally, and as friends who wish no better than to understand each other plainly," he said.

Antinahuel bowed reservedly. The general continued:

"At this moment the people of Valdivia are constituting me, by acclamation, protector of a new confederation, formed of all the states."

"Good!" said the chief.

The Chilians are tired of the continual agitations which disturb the country; they have forced this heavy burden upon me."

These words were pronounced in a hypocritical tone of self-denial, of which the Indian was not the dupe. A smile flitted across his lips.

"To be brief," he continued, assuming a more decided and abrupt manner, "are you prepared to keep your engagements?"

"Why should I not keep them?" Antinahuel remarked.

"Will you march with me?"

"Let my father order, I will obey."

"Come," said the general, angrily, "let us put an end to this; I have not time to enter into a contest of wits with you."

"I do not understand my father," Antinahuel replied.

"We shall never get to the end, chief?" the general said, "if you will not answer me categorically."

"I listen to my father; let him ask, I will reply."

"How many men can you have under arms within twenty-four hours?"

"Ten thousand," said the chief.

"Then do you accept my proposals or not?"

The chief appeared to reflect for an instant.

"Well!" the general exclaimed, impatiently, "time presses."

"That is true; I will, therefore, go and command a counsel, and submit the words of my father to them."

The general with difficulty suppressed his anger.

"You must, doubtless, be joking, chief," he said, "your words cannot be serious."

"Antinahuel is the first toqui of his nation," the Indian replied, haughtily; "he never jokes."

"But you must give me your answer now, in a few minutes!" cried the general; "who knows whether we may not be obliged to march within an hour?"

"It is my duty, as much as it is my father's, to enlarge the territory of my people."

At this moment the gallop of a horse was heard approaching; an orderly

officer appeared. The face of this officer was bathed with perspiration, and spots of blood stained his uniform.

"General!" he said, breathlessly.

"Silence!" the latter hissed, pointing to the chief. The general turned towards Antinahuel.

"Chief," he said, "I have orders to give to this officer—pressing orders."

"Good!" replied the chief; "my father need not inconvenience himself; I can wait."

And after bowing, he left the tent slowly.

"Oh!" said the general to himself, "you demon!"

But perceiving that anger was making him forget himself, he turned towards the officer.

"Well, Diego," he said, "what news have you?"

"Bad," the officer replied, shaking his head; "the people, excited by the Dark Hearts, have rebelled."

"Oh!" the general cried, "shall I never be able to crush them? What has taken place?"

"The people have raised barricades; and Don Tadeo de Leon is at the head of the movement."

"Don Tadeo de Leon!" said the general.

"A part of the troops, seduced by their officers, who have sold themselves to the Dark Hearts, have passed over to their side."

"We have not an instant to lose."

"No; though the soldiers who have remained faithful to you are fighting like lions."

"Malediction!" the general howled; "I will not leave stone upon stone of that accursed city!"

"Yes, but in the first place, we must reconquer it, general, and that will prove rather a rough job, I promise you," replied the old soldier.

"Very well!" said Bustamente; "let 'boot and saddle' be sounded."

Don Pancho was a prey to the most violent rage; for several instants he stamped about his tent, like a wild beast in its cage. This unexpected resistance, in spite of all the measures of precaution he had taken, exasperated him. Suddenly the curtain of his tent was raised. "Ah! chief, is that you? Well?"

"I saw the chief come out, and I thought that perhaps my father would not be sorry to see me."

"And you were right; I am delighted to see you; forget all we have said; I accept all your conditions."

"Yes. Including Valdivia?"

"That above all!" said the general.

"Ah!"

"Yes, and as that province has revolted, in order to be able to give it to you, I must bring it back to its duty, must I not?"

"To be sure you must!"

"Well, as I have it at my heart to fulfil my engagements to you, I am going to march against that city. How many horsemen have you at hand?"

"Twelve hundred."

"Good!" said the general, "they will be more than we shall want."

"The troops are ready," said Diego, entering the tent.

"To saddle, then; let us be gone! let us be gone! And you, chief, will you not accompany us?"

"Let my father move onward! my mosotones and I will tread in his steps quickly."

Ten minutes later, General Bustamente, with his soldiers, was again galloping along the road to Valdivia.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE MOUNTAIN.

DONA ROSARIO was so terrified, and in such mortal anguish, that she fainted. When she recovered her senses, it was dark night. For several minutes her confused thoughts whirled about in her brain; and she endeavoured, but for a long time in vain, to recover the violently broken thread of her ideas. At length light returned to her mind.

"My God! my God! what has happened to me?"

She then opened her eyes, and cast around a despairing look. As well as she could judge, she was lying upon the back of a mule, between two bales; a cord, which passed round her waist, prevented her from rising, but her hands were free. The mule had that rough, irregular trot, peculiar to its species, which made the young girl suffer terribly at every step. Some horse-clothes had been thrown over her, no doubt to protect her from the heavy dews of the night, or perhaps to prevent her from making out what road she was going. Dona Rosario, gently, and with great precaution, slipped the covering down from her face; after a few efforts her head was completely free. She looked around her; but all was dark. As well as she could make out, she was surrounded by Indians.

The rather numerous party—it apparently consisted of a score of individuals—followed a narrow road deeply inclosed between two abrupt mountains, the rocky masses of which, throwing their shadow over the road, augmented the darkness. This road rose with a gentle ascent; and the horses and mules, probably fatigued with a long journey, travelled at a foot-pace. The young girl, scarcely recovered from her fainting, had not been able to judge of the time that had elapsed since her abduction; and yet, by collecting her remembrances, and thinking at what hour she had been the victim of this odious attempt, she calculated that twelve hours must have passed away since she was made a prisoner.

She was ignorant of whom she was with. Many times, it was true, Don Tadeo had spoken to her of an inveterate enemy, of a woman whose hatred watched her incessantly, ready to sacrifice her on the first favourable opportunity. But who was this woman? Was she in her hands at that moment?

These thoughts and many others came in crowds to assail the maiden's bewildered mind. This uncertainty was for her an atrocious torture; truth would, perhaps, have been a consolation. Man is so constructed, that what he is most in dread of is the unknown.

The caravan still proceeded; it had left the ravine, and was climbing a path traced along the edge of a precipice, at the base of which could be heard the dull murmur of invisible water. At times, a stone, half-broken beneath the hoof of a mule, became detached, and rolled with a sinister noise down the side of the mountain, to engulf itself in the waters, into which it plunged with a dull splash, the sound of which ascended from the abyss.

The maiden cast an anxious but cautious look around her ; but the flame of the torches agitated by the wind would not permit her to see anything but the dark outlines of some buildings and the shadows of several individuals, who flitted about her, with cries and laughter—nothing more. The people of the escort were busily employed in unsaddling the horses and unloading the mules, amidst cries and oaths, and did not appear to bestow the least attention upon the young girl.

At length she felt that some one took the mule by the bridle, and she heard him shout in a hoarse voice, *Arrea!*—the word with which the arrieros are accustomed to excite their beasts. What was the meaning of the halt, then? Why did a portion leave her?

Her uncertainty was not of long duration ; at the end of ten minutes at most, the mule stopped again, and the man who led it approached. This man wore an old straw Panama hat, the large brim of which, pulled down over his face, prevented her distinguishing his features. At the sight of this individual, the young girl felt an involuntary shudder run through her frame. The peasant withdrew the covering which enfolded her, untied the cord which bound her, and taking her in his arms, carried her with as much ease as if she had been a child, into a detached cabin.

The interior of this cabin was dark. The young girl was laid upon the ground with a care and attention she did not expect. At the moment when he let her sink softly down from his arms to the ground, the man bent his head down towards her, and in a voice as inaudible as a breath, he whispered, "Courage! and hope!"

As soon as he was gone Dona Rosario sprang upon her feet. The two words pronounced by the unknown had sufficed to restore her presence of mind, and remove all her terrors.

The place in which she was confined was completely dark. At the first moment she in vain endeavoured to distinguish anything in this chaos ; but, by degrees, her eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and, in front of her, she perceived a faint light, which flitted between the badly-joined boards of a door. She then, with great precaution, for fear of arousing her invisible guardians, and stretching out her hand to keep her from contact with any obstacle she could not see, advanced cautiously, and listening attentively, towards the side from which came the light—a light which attracted her as instinctively as a flame attracts the imprudent moth whose wings it burns.

CHAPTER XXXII

ON THE WATCH.

WHAT she heard, but still more what she saw, necessarily powerfully interested Dona Rosario. In a vast room, dimly lighted by one of those yellow candles which the Chilians call *velas de cebo*, fastened to the wall by means of a ring, a woman, still young, and very handsome, attired in a riding-dress of great richness, was seated on an ebony chair. With her right hand she played with a gold-headed whip, and was speaking in an animated tone to a man who stood hat in hand. This man, as well as Dona Rosario could make out, was the same who had carried her into the *cuarto*. The woman was no other than Dona Maria.

Dona Maria's position threw the light of the candle full upon her face, and gave Dona Rosario an opportunity of distinguishing her features. She contemplated them with deep interest, for she felt instinctively that this woman was the enemy who, from her birth, had fatally followed her steps.

The two speakers, who knew not that they were either watched or overheard, resumed their conversation. Dona Rosario did not lose a single word.

"How is it," said the Linda, "that Joan has not come? I expect him."

"Joan sent me in his place."

The man replied with ill-dissembled embarrassment.

"And by what right," said the Linda, in a haughty tone, "does the fellow presume to confide to others the care of accomplishing the orders I give him?"

"Joan is my friend," the man replied.

"What are the ties that unite you to me?" she asked.

"The mission you charged him with is accomplished."

"Ay—but faithfully?"

"The woman is there," he said; during the journey she had spoken to nobody.

"But why did Joan give up his place to you?" she continued.

"Oh!" the man said with a feigned bluntness, "for a very simple reason; Joan is at this moment attracted towards the plain by the black eyes of the wife of a pale-face, which sparkled like fire-flies in the night."

"Well, then," the Linda interrupted, stamping her foot with vexation, "why does not the fool carry her off?"

"I proposed that to him."

"And what did he say?"

"He refused."

"Still," she remarked, "all that does not tell me who you are."

"I! I am the Ulmen in my tribe," he replied.

"Ah!" she said, with an air of satisfaction, "you are an Ulmen of the Puelches, are you? Good!"

"I am the friend of Joan," he remarked simply.

"Do you know the woman whom you have brought here?" the Linda asked.

"How should I know her?"

"Are you ready to obey me in everything?"

"My obedience will depend on my sister."

"This woman is my enemy," said the Linda.

"Must she die?" he asked roughly.

"Oh, no!" she cried eagerly, "these Indians are brutes; they understand nothing of vengeance!"

"Let my sister explain; I do not comprehend."

"Death! that is nothing."

"White death may be so, but an Indian death must be called for many hours before it answers."

"I wish her to live, I tell you!"

"She shall live. Ah!" he added, "the toldo of a chief is empty."

"Oh! oh!" the Linda interrupted; "have you no wives?"

"They are dead."

"And where is your tribe at this moment?"

"Oh!" said the Indian, "far from here—ten suns' march at least."

There was a short silence, during which the Linda reflected. Dona Rosario redoubled her attention.

"And pray," Dona Maria resumed, "what great interest detained you on the plains near the sea-shore?"

"None; I came, as the other Ulmens did, to renew the treaties."

"Had you no other reasons?"

"None at all."

"Listen to me, chief. You have, doubtless, admired the four horses fastened at the gate of this house?"

"They are noble beasts," the Indian replied.

"Well, it only depends upon yourself that I should give them to you."

"Oh! oh!" he cried joyfully; "what must I do?"

"Obey me," said the Linda.

"Whatever I command you?"

"Whatever my sister commands."

"That is well; but remember, if you deceive me, my vengeance will be terrible."

"Why should I deceive my sister?"

"Because your Indian race is so constituted—astute and roguish, ever ready to betray."

A sinister flash gleamed from his eye.

"My sister is mistaken; the Araucanos are loyal."

"We shall see," she said coldly. "Your name?"

"The Musk Rat."

"Very well; listen, Musk Rat."

"My ears are open."

"This woman you brought here must never again revisit the shores of the sea."

"She shall never see them again."

"I do not wish her to die, understand that; she must suffer," the Linda added.

"She shall suffer."

"Yes," said Dona Maria, with sparkling eyes, "I wish that, during a long course of years, she may suffer a martyrdom at every instant; she is young, she will have time to call upon death to deliver her from her misery before it deigns to listen to her."

"Yes," said the Puelche, in a melancholy tone, "I have heard of these men from the chiefs of my tribe."

"That is it!" she said, with delight. "Well, chief, do you think yourself able to traverse these vast deserts?"

"Why should I not?" the Indian replied. "Do there exist obstacles strong enough to resist the Araucano warrior in his course? The puma is the king of the forests, the vulture that of the heavens; but the Aucas is the king of the puma and the eagle; the desert is his."

"Then my brother will accomplish this journey?"

A disdainful smile played for an instant round the lips of the savage warrior.

"I will accomplish it," he said.

"Good! my brother is a chief; I perceive he is one now."

The Puelche bowed modestly.

"My brother will go there, then, and when he arrives in the Chaco, he will sell the pale girl."

"I will sell her," replied the Indian.

"That is well! my brother will be faithful?"

"I am a chief; I have but one word, my tongue is not forked; but why should I take this woman so far?"

Dona Maria cast a penetrating glance at him.

"I only made a simple observation to my sister; it concerns me little, and she need not answer me if she does not think proper," he said, with indifference.

The brow of the Linda became serene again.

"The remark is just, chief; I will answer it. Why take her so far, you asked me: because Antinahuel loves this woman—his heart is softened by her—and perhaps he will suffer himself to be moved by her prayers, and restore her to her family."

After uttering these words, Dona Maria arose, with head erect, sparkling eyes, and extended arm; there was in her aspect something fatal and terrible.

"Go," she cried, "before she departs for ever, I will see this woman once—only once—and speak with her for a few minutes: bring her hither!"

The Indian went out silently; this woman, so beautiful and so cruel, terrified him.

Dona Rosario, on hearing this atrocious sentence pronounced against her, fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FACE TO FACE.

THE door of the cuarto in which Dona Rosario was confined was thrown open, and the Puelche warrior appeared.

"Come with me!" he said, in a rough voice.

Conscious of the inutility of a resistance which could only be dangerous to her amidst the bandits who surrounded her, and bowing her head with resignation, she followed. Dona Maria had resumed her place in the ebony chair. At the slight noise made by the footsteps of the young lady, she drew herself up; a flash of hatred gleamed from her dark eyes.

The two women examined each other intensely; their looks crossed; the hawk and the dove were face to face. A deathlike silence reigned in the apartment; at intervals the wind came in gusts and dismal moanings, through the ill-joined boards of the doors, shook the old building to its foundation, and agitated the flame of the only candle that illumined the vast gloomy room in which the two women were. After a sufficiently long pause, the Linda, who, with that instinct which women possess in such a high degree, had examined in detail, one by one, the numerous beauties of the charming girl, spoke—

"Yes," she said, in a hollow voice, "yes, this girl is beautiful; she has everything to make her an object of love—to see her must be to love her; but," she added, in a piercing, shrill voice, "I have her at length within the power of my vengeance!"

"What have I done to you, madam, that you should hate me thus?" the maiden asked.

"What have you done to me, silly creature?" the Linda cried, bounding up like a wounded lioness, "what have you done to me?" and then added—"Ah! ah! that's true, *you* have done nothing to me!"

"Alas, madam! I do not even know you; this is the first time I have been in your presence."

"Yes, I allow it," the Linda replied; "you have done nothing to me, and, personally, I have nothing to reproach you with; but, by making you suffer, learn that it is upon *him* I avenge myself."

"I do not understand what you mean, madam."

"Senseless fool, do not play with the lioness who is ready to devour you. I am Dona Maria, whom they call the Linda; do you understand me now?"

"Not more than I did before, madam," replied Dona Rosario; "I have never even heard that name."

"Can that be true?" she cried doubtingly.

"I swear it is."

Dona Linda strode about the apartment with hasty steps. Dona Rosario looked stealthily at this woman, without being able to account to herself for the emotion which her presence, and the sound of her voice, caused her to experience.

"Oh!" murmured the Linda passionately, "what is going on with me? I am weak enough to allow myself to be subdued by the tears of that paltry creature!"

Like Indian warriors, who, when fastened to the stake of blood, sing their own exploits to encourage them to endure bravely the tortures which their executioners silently prepare, the Linda recalled the maddening remembrance of all the outrages Don Tadeo had loaded her with.

"Listen to me, girl," she said, "this is the first and last time we shall be in the presence of each other. What you will learn will be hereafter, perhaps, a consolation to you, and help you to bear with courage the miseries I reserve for you," she added.

"I will listen to you, madam," Rosario replied meekly, "although I am certain that what you are about to say cannot render me guilty."

"Do you think so?" the Linda said; "well then, listen; we have time to talk. A woman," the Linda continued, "a young and beautiful woman, more beautiful than you, fragile child of cities—a woman, I say, had married a man, also young, and handsome as the evil angel before his fall, who with perfidiously golden words, by opening before her immense and unknown horizons, had so seduced her, the poor, poor girl, that in a few days he induced her to abandon the roof which had sheltered her infancy, and to which her aged father in vain recalled her up to the day of his death."

"Oh, that is frightful," cried Dona Rosario.

"Why so? he married her, so morality was satisfied, in the eyes of the world. This woman was pure, and could thenceforward move with head erect before the crowd. But everything passes away in this world, and most quickly of all, the love of the most passionate man. Only a year after marriage this woman, alone in the most retired room of her dwelling, wept over the remembrance of her happiness. Her husband had deserted her! A child born of this union, a little fair girl, a rosy-lipped cherub, whose eyes reflected the azure of the heavens, was the sole consolation which in her misfortunes was left to the poor abandoned mother. One night, when she was plunged in sleep, her husband stole like a thief into her house, seized the child, and disappeared."

"And the mother?" Dona Rosario anxiously asked.

"The mother," she continued, in a low broken voice, "the mother was doomed never to see her child again. She never has seen her. Prayers, threats, everything in turn, have been employed without success. And now, this mother, who adores her child, and would sacrifice her life for her—this mother has vowed a hatred against this man. I am this mother! and the man who

ravished from her all her happiness—the man whom she hates as she does the demon whose heart he bears, is Don Tadeo de Leon ! ”

“ Don Tadeo ! ” Rosario cried.

“ Yes ! ” the Linda said furiously, “ yes, Don Tadeo, your lover ! ”

The maiden sprang towards Dona Maria, and seizing her arm violently, cried indignantly—

“ What have you dared to say ? It is false, madam ! ”

“ Can this be true ? ” the Linda asked. “ Can I have been so grossly mistaken ? But then,” she added mistrustfully, “ who are you ? ”

“ I will tell you who I am, madam ! ” Rosario replied.

All at once the hasty gallop of several horses was heard from without, mingled with cries and oaths.

“ What can the matter be ? ” said Dona Maria.

“ Oh ! ” said Dona Rosario, clasping her hands fervently ; “ oh, my God ! are you sending me liberators ? ”

“ You are not free yet,” the Linda said.

The tumult increased greatly ; the door, violently pushed from without, flew open, and several men rushed into the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE REVOLT.

THE multiplicity of the scenes we have to describe, and the exigencies of our story, compel us to abandon Dona Rosario and the Linda, and return to Valdivia. Electrified by the heroic conduct of the King of Darkness, the patriots fought with the greatest obstinacy. The Dark-Hearts appeared to have the gift of ubiquity ; their numbers increased, they were everywhere at the head of the insurgents, exciting them by gesture and voice ; but, above all, by their example. The city was completely cut up by barricades, against which the few troops who remained faithful to General Bustamente struggled in vain.

The city was in the power of the insurgents ; for as the battle from this moment was concentrated at one point, it was not difficult to foresee with which party the victory would remain.

The general who commanded the garrison, and whom we saw upon the steps of the cabildo, read with so much arrogance the decree which changed the form of government, bit his lips with rage and performed prodigies of valour, to give Bustamente time to arrive. As soon as he saw the turn things had taken, he sent off an express for the general with the utmost promptitude. This express was Diego.

“ Lieutenant,” he said, in conclusion, “ you see in what a position we are ; you must reach the general.”

“ I will reach him, general ; be at ease on that head ! ” Diego replied intrepidly.

“ And I will endeavour to hold out until your return.”

Don Diego, before he finished speaking, had ridden desperately at the ranks of the insurgents, spurring on his horse, and waving his sword. The Dark-Hearts, astonished by such an attack on the part of a single man, at the first moment unconsciously opened their ranks before him as to a canister shot, incapable of resisting the impetuous shock of this apparently invulnerable demon who mowed down all that came in his way. Diego skilfully took advantage of the disorder

produced on the enemy by his furious assault ; he kept pushing on, and, after incredible efforts, succeeded in getting out of the city.

The general did not delay his return to Valdivia a minute, for he felt that success would be an immense advantage to him. As a conqueror, his march to Santiago would be nothing but a triumph ; the authorities of the cities he passed through would rival each other in ranging themselves beneath his standard ; whereas, if he were forced to abandon Valdivia as a fugitive, he would be tracked like a wild beast, and obliged to seek safety in a prompt flight, either in Bolivia or Buenos Ayres.

The horsemen advanced amidst a cloud of dust raised by their precipitate course, rushing along the road like a whirlwind, and with a noise like thunder. Two lances' length in advance of the soldiers, Don Pancho, bending over the neck of his horse, with pale brow and clenched teeth, galloped at full speed, keeping his eyes fixed upon the lofty steeples of Valdivia, whose dark shadows became more enlarged on the horizon every minute. Within half a mile of the city he halted his squadron.

The troops brought up by the general were not numerous from the European point of view, according to which we are accustomed to see great masses in conflict ; they, at most, did not exceed eight hundred men.

Don Pancho was a rough soldier, accustomed to the struggles of civil wars. Endowed with courage bordering on rashness, and devoured by ambition, he prepared to re-establish his compromised affairs by an irresistible attack. The country in the neighbourhood of Valdivia is a real English garden, interspersed with thickets, apple-orchards, coques, and slender streams of water rippling away to the river. It was very easy for the general to conceal his arrival. Two soldiers were detached as scouts, in order to learn the state of things. At the expiration of a few minutes they returned. The outskirts of the city were deserted, the insurgents had driven the troops back into the centre, and, according to the scouts, with the imprudence of citizens metamorphosed suddenly into soldiers, they had left no reserve, or even placed sentinels, to secure their rear against surprise.

The general cast fierce and desperate glances around him, looking, but unsuccessfully, for a point of issue from the menacing forest of bayonets crossed before him, and which enclosed him as in a steel network. Some authors have amused themselves at the expense of the wars and battles of the Americans, in which they say the two armies always take care to place themselves out of reach of cannon shot, so as never to have a single man killed. This pleasantry, which is in very bad taste, has assumed the proportions of a calumny. Thrice the soldiers rushed upon the insurgents, and thrice were they repulsed with enormous loss. The battle was horrible, without mercy on either side ; they fought hand to hand, foot to foot, breast to breast, to the last breath, only falling to die. The troops, decimated by this frightful carnage, gradually gave ground ; the space they occupied became narrower and narrower, and the moment did not appear distant when they would disappear under the popular flood which continued to ascend, and threatened to engulf them under its irresistible mass. The general collected about fifty men resolved to die or open a passage, and he made a desperate attempt. It was a collision of giants.

Suddenly a man placed himself before him, like a rock which rises from the depths of the sea. At the sight of him the general paused, in spite of himself, with a stifled cry of surprise and rage. This man was Don Tadeo de Leon, his mortal enemy.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LION AT BAY.

"My God!" said the general, "am I the dupe of an hallucination?"

"Ah! ah!" the King of Darkness exclaimed, with an ironical smile, "you recognize me then, general?"

"Don Tadeo de Leon!" Don Pancho cried, in horror. "Do the dead then arise from the tomb?"

"Yes," Don Tadeo replied, in a stern voice, "you are not mistaken, Don Pancho. I am Don Tadeo de Leon."

"Man or demon," the general shouted, "I will fight you as a man, and send you back again to the hell from which you have escaped!"

His enemy smiled disdainfully.

"Your hour has come, Don Pancho," he said; "you are due to the justice of the Dark Hearts."

"You do not hold me yet, wretched traitor! If I cannot conquer, I can die."

"No, your hour has struck, I tell you; you are ours, you shall die, but not the death of a soldier."

"If that be the case," the general yelled, "come and take me!"

Don Tadeo did not deign a reply; he gave a signal, and a lasso whizzed through the air, launched by an invisible hand, and fell round the general's shoulders. Astonished by this unexpected attack, before he could make the least possible resistance, he received a terrific shock, lost his stirrups, was pulled from his horse, and dragged amongst the insurgents.

"Free him from that slip-knot," Don Tadeo said. "Secure his person, but treat him with respect."

Don Tadeo turned towards the soldiers.

"Surrender," he shouted, "surrender! the man who misled you is in our power; your lives shall be spared."

As if by a spontaneous movement, they threw down their muskets, crying aloud:—

"Chili! Chili! liberty! liberty!"

"That is well!" said Don Tadeo; "leave the city, encamp at the distance of a mile, and await orders."

The conquered soldiers followed the road they had traversed an hour before; they passed through the silent ranks of the insurgents, which opened to give them passage. Without loss of time, Don Tadeo, followed by a crowd of his partisans, directed his course towards the Plaza Mayor, where the battle still raged.

But the day was passing away, their ammunition was growing exhausted, a great number of their comrades were stretched dead at their feet, and nothing could support them but the hope that the succour so impatiently expected was at hand. In the heat of their own contest they had not heard the noise of the battle fought by Don Pancho at the city gates, in which but few shots had been fired, as it had been principally decided by cold steel.

Dejected, and with downcast eyes, the senator, who had been the bearer of the fatal proclamation, trembled in all his limbs; he regretted, but too late, having thrown himself into this hornet's nest; and he offered up the most magnificent vows to the innumerable saints of the golden Spanish legend, if they would bring him safe and sound through the perils which surrounded him.

At every shot he heard, the poor senator jumped like a Guanaco, with startled eyes; and when, now and then, in spite of the precautions he had taken, the sinister hissing of a bullet resounded in his ear, he threw himself flat on his face.

At first, the contortions and cries of Don Ramon had very much amused the officers and soldiers among whom accident had placed him; they had even taken delight in augmenting his terrors; but, at length, as happens more frequently in such cases than people fancy, the pleasantries had ceased.

"The devil take the poltroon!" the general at length cried, angrily; "cannot you keep your trembling limbs still? Caspita! console yourself, they won't kill you more than once."

"Ah! that is very easy for you to say," the senator replied, in a broken voice; "I am no soldier; it is your trade to be killed, it is all one to you."

"Hum!" said the general, "not quite so much so as you may think; but we shall all go together."

"What is that you say?" the poor man muttered.

"Caramba! it is clear as day, if Don Pancho does not make haste and come, all of us here will die."

"But I do not wish to die!" said the senator, bursting into tears; "I am no soldier. Oh! I implore you, let me go away!"

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"What consequence can it be to you?" the senator continued, in a supplicating tone; "do save my life!"

"How the devil can I help you?" the general said.

"Well, now, look here," said the senator; "you owe me two thousand piastres."

"What then?" the general, vexed at this ill-timed remark, said, sharply.

"Get me away from here, and I will cry quits."

"You are a fool, Don Ramon; do you think if I could get safely away from here, that I would remain?"

"I see what you are," said the senator, despondingly; "you are but a false friend."

In short, the poor man was almost mad; he knew not what he said, terror had deprived him of the little sense he ever possessed. But, in reality, the position became every instant more critical; the carnage was horrible, the soldiers fell one after another beneath the bullets of the insurgents, who were sheltered by every corner or the plaza.

All at once the senator bounded forward like a chamois; he made directly to the general, and seized his arm.

"We are saved!" he cried; "thanks be to God!"

"Hilloh! what's the matter now, Don Ramon? What bee has stung you? are you really mad?"

"I have not been stung," the senator replied, as fast as he could speak, "nor am I mad; we are saved."

"Well, how? what is it? Is Don Pancho coming?"

"Don Pancho, indeed! I wish he were at the devil!"

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Why, do you not see, yonder? look, behind the barricade which blocks the entrance of the calle."

"What is there to see?"

"Why, a flag of truce! a white flag!"

"Ah!" said the general, eagerly, "let us look!"

And he did look.

"True!" he said, at the expiration of a minute. "Success to all cowards, say I, for having good eyes."

At that moment, a nearly spent ball came ricochetting and whizzing close to Don Ramon's ear.

"Lord, have mercy upon me!" he cried, falling flat on his face.

In the meantime, the general had likewise caused a flag of truce to be hoisted on his entrenchments, and had given orders for the firing to cease. The noise of the combat being hushed, the senator, like a rabbit relieved from alarm, raised his head a little.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TRUCE.

As soon as the flag of truce was hoisted, the firing at once ceased. The troops, who had ceased to hope for succour, were not sorry to find that the insurgents saved their military honour. General Cornejo, in particular, was tired of the hopeless combat.

"Well, Don Ramon," he said, "I think I have found means to enable you to escape without striking a blow; so what we agreed to stands good, does it not?"

The senator looked at him with a bewildered air; the worthy man had not the least recollection of what he had either said or done while the balls were whistling round him.

"I do not at all understand you, general," he replied.

"Poor man! pretend to be innocent. do!" said the general, laughing; "do you wish to persuade me you are like the Guanacos, which lose their memory through trembling with fear?"

"Upon my honour," said the other, "I swear that I have not the least remembrance of having promised anything."

"Ah! well, it is possible, for you were devilish frightened. But I will refresh your memory. You said to me, on the spot where we now stand, not more than half an hour ago, that if I found the means of securing your escape safe and sound you would hold me quits for the two thousand piastres I lost to you, and owed you."

"Do you flatter yourself that that is the truth?" said the senator.

"I am sure it is. Ask these gentlemen," the general asked, turning towards some officers who stood by.

"Oh, certainly! true to the letter," they said.

"Ah! ah!"

"Yes, and as I would not listen to you, you added—"

"What!" Don Ramon, who knew of old the man he had to deal with, said, with a start—"do you mean to say that I added something?"

"The devil! yes," said the other. "You added this; and I repeat your own words. You said, as plainly as you could speak—'And I will give a thousand piastres in addition.'"

"Oh, that is not possible!" the senator ejaculated.

"Perhaps I did not understand you?"

"That must be it."

"Do you admit you mentioned the two thousand?" asked the general, quietly.

"Not at all! not at all!" replied Don Ramon.

"Perhaps you meant more; well, we will not haggle about that."

"I never said a word of the kind!" the exasperated senator exclaimed.

"In that case," said the general, with a stern frown, "you mean to say that I have told a falsehood."

"Pardon me, my dear general," said Don Ramon, aware that he had made a false move, "you are perfectly right; I do now remember it was two thousand piastres I promised you in addition."

It was now the general's turn to be at a loss, for this generosity on the part of the senator, whose avarice was proverbial, confused him.

"But," Don Ramon added, with an air of triumph, "you have not saved me."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, Santiago! as we are going to hold a parley, you are too late, and our bargain is void."

"Oh! oh!" said Don Tiburcio, with a jeering smile, "you think so, do you?"

"Caspita! I am sure of it."

"And yet you are deceived, my dear friend, as you shall judge: come with me, the flag of truce is now crossing the barricades."

"You are joking."

"I never joke about serious circumstances."

"In Heaven's name explain yourself!" said the poor senator, whose fears had all returned.

"Lord! it is the simplest thing in the world," said the general, carelessly; "I have but to declare to the leader of the revolt, and be assured I will not fail to do so, that I only acted by your orders."

"Well, but that is not true," interrupted the Don.

"I know that," the general replied; "but, as you are a senator, they will believe me, and you will be shot."

Don Ramon was thunderstruck by this piece of implacable logic; he found that he was in a hobble, from which he could not possibly escape without paying handsomely. He looked at his *friend*, who surveyed him with a pitilessly ironical smile, whilst the officers bit their lips to keep from laughing.

"Well, Don Tiburcio, I admit that I owe you two thousand piastres, but I will pay you."

This was the only epigram he ventured to indulge in regarding the general's willingness to pay.

The general meantime prepared to listen to the propositions of the officer with the flag of truce. This officer was Don Tadeo de Leon.

"What do you come here for?" the general asked.

"To offer you good terms, if you will surrender."

"Surrender!" the general shouted with a laugh; "you must be made, sir!" and, then he added: "Remove the bandage."

The bandage fell accordingly.

"Look round you," said the general, haughtily, "do we look like people asking for a favour?"

"No, general, you are a stout soldier, and your troops are brave; you ask no favour, it is we who come to offer to lay down our arms on both sides, and put an end to this fratricidal contest," Don Tadeo replied.

"Who are you, may I ask, sir?" said the general.

"I am Don Tadeo de Leon, whom your leader ordered to be shot."

"You!" cried the general, "you here!"

"I, myself; and I have another name."

"Tell it to me, sir."

"I am called the King of Darkness."

"The leader of the Dark Hearts!" the general murmured, starting.

"Yes, general, I am the leader of the Dark Hearts, but I am still something more."

"Explain yourself, sir," the general asked, who began to be in doubt how to behave toward the strange personage who was speaking to him.

"I am the leader of the men whom you term insurgents, to defend the institutions which you have overthrown."

"Sir!" said the general, "your words——"

"Are just," continued Don Tadeo; "ask your own soldier's heart, general, and then tell me which side is right."

"I am not a lawyer, sir," Don Tiburcio replied impatiently; "you have yourself said that I am a soldier."

"Let us not lose time uselessly in idle speeches, sir; will you, or will you not, lay down your arms?"

"By what right do you make me such a proposal?" the general asked.

"I could answer you," replied Don Tadeo, sternly, "that it is by the right of the stronger, and that you know as well as I do that you are combating for a lost cause, and that you are persisting without advantage in a senseless struggle; but I prefer addressing myself to your heart, and saying, why should brothers and fellow-countrymen continue to cut each other's throats?—why should we any longer shed such precious blood? Make your conditions, general."

The general felt himself moved. This noble language had found an echo in his heart; he looked down on the ground, and reflected for several minutes; at length, raising his head, he replied—

"Sir, believe me it costs me much not to answer as I could wish what you have done me the honour to say to me; but I have a leader above me."

"In your turn please to explain yourself, sir."

"I have sworn to Don Pancho Bustamente to defend his cause to the death."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, unless Don Pancho Bustamente were killed or a prisoner, I will lay down my life for him."

"Is that the only reason that prevents you, general?"

"Yes, the only one."

"In case General Bustamente should be either killed or a prisoner, you would surrender?"

"Instantly, I repeat."

"Well," replied Don Tadeo, stretching out his arm in the direction of the barricade by which he had come, "look yonder, general."

Don Tiburcio looked in the direction indicated, and uttered a cry of surprise and sorrow. Don Pancho Bustamente appeared at the top of the barricade, his head bare.

"Do you see him?" Don Tadeo asked.

"Yes," replied the general, sorrowfully; "we all surrender, sir;" and turning the point of his sword to the ground, he bent the blade with the intention of breaking it. Don Tadeo stopped him by seizing the sword, saying:

"General, keep that weapon, it will serve you against the enemies of our country."

The general made no reply; he silently pressed the hand which the King of Darkness held out to him.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TWO ROGUISH PROFILES.

THE city was quiet, the revolution was complete. The soldiers had evacuated Valdivia, which was left completely in the power of the Dark Hearts. As soon as peace was re-established, the Dark Hearts gave orders that the barricades should be destroyed. By the force of accomplished facts alone, Don Tadeo de Leon found himself quite naturally invested with power.

"Well," he asked Valentine, "what do you think of what you have seen?"

"Faith," the Parisian replied, "I think people must come to America to see how men can be caught with hook and line."

Don Tadeo could not refrain from smiling at this whimsical answer.

"Do not leave me," he said: "all is not over yet."

"I ask no better; but our friends yonder, don't you think they will be very uneasy at our long absence?"

"Can you for a moment imagine that I have forgotten them? Within an hour you will be at liberty. Come with me; I want to show you two faces to which our victory has given an expression very different from that which they generally wear."

"That will be curious," said Valentine.

"Yes," Don Tadeo replied, "or hideous, whichever you please."

"Hum! man is not perfect," said Valentine, philosophically.

"Fortunately not; if he were, he would be execrable," Don Tadeo remarked.

They entered the *cabildo*, the doors of which were guarded by a detachment of Dark Hearts. The vast saloons of the palace were invaded by an eager crowd, who came to salute the rising sun; that is to say, they came to offer the spectacle of their baseness to the fortunate man, whom, no doubt, they would have stoned if success had not crowned his audacious attempt. Don Tadeo passed, without seeing them.

The two gentlemen, after many delays caused by the increasing crowd which closed around them, reached at last a retired apartment, in which there were only two persons. These two persons were General Tiburcio and Senator Don Ramon Sandias. The physiognomy of these persons offered a striking contrast. The general, with a sad face and a pensive step, walked about, whilst the senator, luxuriantly reclining on a *fauteuil*, with a smile upon his lips, his visage expanded, and one leg thrown over the other, was fanning himself carelessly with an embroidered handkerchief. At the sight of Don Tadeo, the general advanced rapidly; as for the senator, he sat upright in his chair.

"Sir," the general said, in a low voice, "two words."

"Speak, general," replied Don Tadeo; "I am entirely at your disposal."

"Good heavens, sir!" said he, "I am an old soldier, unacquainted with diplomacy; I had a friend, almost a brother, and I am a prey to mortal uneasiness on his account."

"And that friend?"

"Is General Bustamente. You must know," he added, warmly, "that we have been fellow-soldiers thirty years; and I should wish—" here he stopped.

"You would like?" said Don Tadeo, quietly.

"To know the fate that is reserved for him."

Don Tadeo gave the general a melancholy glance.

"General Bustamente is a great criminal. While a leader in power he wished to change the form of government against the will of the people from whom he held

his position, and in contempt of the laws, which he shamelessly trampled under foot."

"That is but too true," said the general.

"General Bustamente has been implacable during the course of his too long career; you know that he who sows the wind can only hope to reap the tempest."

"Hence!"

"The same implacability will be shown to him that he has shown to others."

"That is to say?"

"He will, in all probability, be condemned to death."

"I feared as much; but will this condemnation be long delayed?"

"Two days at most; the commission which must try him will be formed to-day."

"Poor friend!" said the general, piteously; "and that's the end! Will you grant me a favour, sir?"

"Name it."

"As the general must die, it would be a consolation to him to have a friend by his side."

"No doubt it would."

"Allow me to be his guard. I am sure he will be happy to know that it is I who have the duty of watching over him."

"So be it—your request is granted. Have you anything else to say? I shall be happy to serve you."

"No, I thank you, sir; that is all I desired,—Ah! one word more!"

"Speak."

"Can I be allowed to take this guard soon?"

"Immediately, if you like."

"I thank you, sir," said the general, and quitted the room.

"Poor man!" said Valentine.

"Eh?" cried Don Tadeo.

"I said, poor man!"

"Oh, yes; I heard you plainly enough, but of whom were you speaking?"

"Of the unfortunate man who has just left us."

Don Tadeo shrugged his shoulders, and Valentine looked at him with surprise.

"Do you think you know whence the solicitude of this poor man, as you call him, for his friend arises?"

"Why, from his friendship for him; that is clear."

"Well, then, allow me to tell you you are completely mistaken; the poor general is only desirous to be near his companion in arms, that he may have the opportunity of suppressing the proofs of his complicity in the rash enterprise of yesterday; proofs which Don Pancho has about him."

"Can that be possible?"

"By Saint Jago, yes! he would kill him if necessary."

"But," Don Tadeo continued, pointing to the senator, "I think we have something here that will cause you an agreeable feeling."

As soon as Don Ramon saw the general leave the apartment, he quitted his easy chair, and advanced towards Don Tadeo, bowing obsequiously.

"To whom have I the honour of speaking?" said the King of Darkness with studied politeness.

"Sir," the other replied, with a jaunty, gentlemanly air, "my name is Don Ramon Sandias."

"How can I be of service to you, sir?" said Don Tadeo, bowing.

"Oh," said Don Ramon; "personally, I ask nothing."

"Indeed!"

"Caspita; no; I am rich, what more can I want? But I am a Chilian, a patriot,

sir; and, what is more, a senator. Placed in an exceptional position, I am bound to give my fellow-citizens unequivocal proofs of my devotion to the holy cause of liberty."

"Certainly."

"I have heard, sir, that the wretched Cabecillo, the cause of this silly movement, is in your hands."

"Yes, sir," replied Don Tadeo, with imperturbable coolness.

"You are going to bring this man to trial?"

"Within forty-eight hours, sir."

"That is right, sir. It is thus that justice should be dealt to these shameless agitators, who, in contempt of the sacred laws of humanity, seek to plunge our beautiful country into the gulf of revolutions."

"Sir!"

"Pardon me for speaking thus," said Don Ramon; "I feel that my freedom goes far, but my indignation carries me away, sir; it is quite time that these makers of widows and orphans should receive the exemplary chastisement they merit."

"Sir, this man is not yet condemned."

"And that is exactly what brings me to you, sir. As a senator I claim of you the right which belongs to me, of presiding over the commission."

"Your request is granted, sir," Don Tadeo replied.

"Thank you, sir!" said the senator; "however painful the duty may be, I shall know how to perform it."

After bowing deeply the senator left the room.

"You see," said Don Tadeo, turning to Valentine, "Don Pancho had two friends upon whom he thought he could depend: one took upon him to proclaim him, the other to defend him."

"It is monstrous!" said Valentine, with disgust.

"No," replied Don Tadeo; "he has failed."

"I have had enough of your politics with two faces," replied Valentine; "allow me to return to our friends."

Valentine left the room, went straight to the stables, saddled his horse himself, and set off at a gallop. A vague uneasiness disturbed him, he had a presentiment of some misfortune or another.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WOUNDED MAN.

LET us turn to the Count de Prebois. When the abduction was committed, that part of the plain where Don Tadeo had pitched his camp was deserted. The crowd had all gone to the side where the renewal of the treaties was taking place. Besides, the measures of the ravishers had been so judiciously taken, all had passed so quickly, without resistance, without cries or tumult, that no alarm had been given, and no one could suspect what was going on.

Louis remained for a considerable time lying senseless in front of the tent. By a singular chance, the peons, the arrieros, and even the two Indian chiefs, who could not think there was anything to be dreaded, had all gone. When the cross had been planted, and the toqui and the general had gone, arm in arm, to the tent of the latter, the crowd began to separate into little groups.

The Indian chiefs were the first to quit the scene; on approaching the little camp,

they were surprised at not seeing Louis, and a certain appearance of disorder in the baggage filled them with uneasiness.

Louis was still lying where the assassins had left him, stretched across the entrance to the tent, his discharged pistols in his hands, his head thrown back, his mouth half open, and his teeth clenched. The blood had ceased to flow. The two men looked at him for a moment with a feeling of stupor.

"He is dead!" said Curumilla.

"He seems so," Trangoil-Lanec replied.

He raised the young man's senseless head, untied his cravat, and opened his vest.

"This is a revenge!" he murmured.

"What is to be done?" said Curumilla.

"Let us try to recover him—I hope he is not dead."

And then, with infinite address and incredible celerity, the two Indians bestowed upon the wounded man the most intelligent and most effective care. For a long time all were useless. At length a sigh, faint as a breath, exhaled painfully from the oppressed breast of the young man; a slight flush tinted his cheeks, and after several efforts, he opened his eyes.

"Loss of blood alone has made him faint," said Curumilla, "the wounds are wide, but not dangerous."

"But what has been going on here!" Trangoil-Lanec asked.

"Hush!" said Curumilla.

The young man's lips moved silently; but at length he pronounced with a great effort, the single word—

"Rosario!"

Then he sank back again.

"Ah!" cried Curumilla, as if a sudden light had broken upon him, "where is the young pale-faced maiden?" and he sprang into the tent.

The Indians lifted up the wounded man gently in their arms, and carried him into the tent, where they placed him in Rosario's empty hammock. Louis recovered his senses, but almost immediately was overcome by a profound drowsiness. After having made him as comfortable as they could, the two Indians left the tent, and began, with the instinct of their race, to seek on the ground for indications they could ask of no witness, but which would show them traces they could understand.

The peons and arrieros had returned from the ceremony, and expressed the greatest terror on learning what had taken place during their absence. After the two chiefs had smoked a few minutes, they extinguished their pipes, and Trangoil-Lanec began—

"My brother is a wise chief, let him say what he has seen."

"I will speak, since my brother desires it," Curumilla replied, bowing his head; "the pale maiden with the blue eyes has been carried off by five horsemen."

To this Trangoil-Lanec made a sign of assent.

"These five horsemen came from the other side of the river; their footmarks are strongly imprinted on the ground, which was wetted in the places where the horses trod with their dripping hoofs; four of these horsemen are Huiliches, the fifth is a pale-face.

"Good!" said Trangoil-Lanec, "my brother has the eyes of a Quanico; nothing escapes him."

"Of the four horsemen who dismounted, three are Indians; but the fourth is a Muruche, for the jewels of his spurs have left deep marks all around. The three first have crept up to the tent, where Don Louis was talking with the young blue-eyed maiden."

"Good!" Trangoil-Lanec replied, "my brother knows everything. The ravishers have crossed the river, and gone in the direction of the mountains. Now, what will my brother do?"

"Trangoil-Lanec is an experienced chief, he will wait for Don Valentine; Curumilla will go upon the track."

"My brother has spoken well; he is wise and prudent; he will find them."

"Yes, Curumilla will find them," the chief replied.

After saying these words, he arose, saddled his horse, and left the camp; Trangoil-Lanec returned and took his place by the wounded man. The day passed away thus. The Spaniards had all left the plain; the Indians, for the most part, had followed their example; there only remained a few tardy Araucanos: but these, also, were preparing to depart. Towards evening Louis found himself much better.

"Oh!" said the young man, "Rosario! poor Rosario is lost!"

"My brother must not be depressed with grief," Trangoil-Lanec replied softly; "Curumilla is upon the track of the ravishers."

"Do you seriously tell me that? Is Curumilla really in pursuit of them?" the young man asked.

"Trangoil-Lanec is an Ulmen," the Araucano replied proudly: "no lie has ever soiled his lips. I repeat that Curumilla is in pursuit of the ravishers. Let my brother hope."

A sudden flush crossed the young man's face at these words; a sad smile curled his pale lips. All at once the furious galloping of a horse was heard.

"Good!" Trangoil-Lanec murmured, looking at the wounded man, whose regular breathing proclaimed that he was sleeping peacefully. "What will Don Valentine say to all this?"

And he strode out hastily to meet the Parisian.

"Chief!" he cried, in a tremulous voice, "can what the peons say be true?"

"Yes," the chief replied coolly.

The young man sank down, as if thunder-struck. The Indian seated himself gently upon a bale, and placing himself beside him, said—

"My brother has much courage."

"Alas!" the young man exclaimed in an agonised voice, "Louis, my poor Louis, assassinated! Oh!" he added, with a terrible gesture, "I will avenge him."

The chief looked at him for an instant attentively.

"What does my brother mean?" he asked, "his friend is not dead."

"Oh! why do you seek to deceive me, chief?"

"I speak the truth; Don Louis is not dead," the Ulmen replied.

"Oh!" he cried, impetuously, and springing up, "he lives?—is that possible?"

"He has received two wounds."

"Two wounds!"

"Yes, but they are not dangerous."

Valentine remained for an instant stupefied by this good news.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, throwing himself into the arms of the chief, "it is true, is it not?—his life is not in danger."

"No, no, my brother can reassure himself; loss of blood alone reduced him to a state of torpor."

"Thanks! thanks, chief! I can see him, may I not?"

"He is asleep,"

"Oh! I will not wake him, be assured of that."

"See him, then," Trangoil-Lanec replied, smiling.

Valentine went in. He looked at his friend, peacefully sleeping; he leant softly over him, and impressing a kiss upon his brow, whispered—

"Sleep, dear brother, I will watch."

The lips of the wounded man moved; he murmured—

"Valentine, save her!"

"Come here, chief," said the Parisian to Trangoil-Lanec, "and tell me the details of what has passed, that I may know how to avenge my brother, and save her he loves."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ARAUCANIAN DIPLOMACY.

ANTINAHUEL had not remained long inactive. Scarce had General Bustamente's escort disappeared in the cloud of dust ere he remounted his horse, and crossed the river. When he arrived on the other bank, he planted his lance in the ground, and turned towards the herald.

"Let the three toquis, the Ulmens, and the Apo-Ulmens meet here in an hour," he said; "the fire of council shall be lighted on this spot for a grand council."

The herald bowed down to his horse's neck and set off at full speed. Antinahuel cast a glance around him. All the chiefs had regained their huts; one warrior alone remained. On perceiving him a smile stole over the lips of the toqui. This warrior was a man of lofty stature, proud carriage, and haughty countenance, whose piercing look conveyed a fierce and cruel expression. He appeared to be in the prime of life, that is to say, about forty years of age. He replied to the toqui's smile by a look of intelligence, and to his ear said, with an accent of gratified hatred—

"When the cougouars tear each other to pieces, they prepare a rich quarry for the eagles of the Andes."

"The Puelches are eagles," Antinahuel replied; "they are masters of the other side of the mountains; they leave to the Huiliche women the care of weaving their ponchos."

At this sarcasm, launched against the Huiliches, a fraction of the Araucano people, who devote themselves principally to agriculture, the Apo-Ulmen frowned.

"My father is severe with his sons," he said.

"The Black Stag is a formidable chief in his nation," Antinahuel remarked, "he is the first of the Apo-Ulmens of the province of the maritime country. His heart is Puelche; my soul rejoices when he is at my side. Why is it that the Ulmens are not of the same temper as he?"

"My brother has explained the reason. Obligated to live in continual trade relations with the Spaniards, the tribes of the flat country have laid down the lance to take up the pick-axe; they have become cultivators."

"Can that be true?" Antinahuel cried; "may they be depended upon?"

"What is the use of speaking of the subject at this moment?" said the Apo-Ulmen, with a smile! "has not my father just come from renewing the treaties?"

"That is true," said the toqui, "peace is secured for a long time."

"My father is a wise chief, that which he does is well done," the other replied.

Antinahuel was preparing to reply, when an Indian arrived at full speed, and stopped suddenly before the two chiefs. The panting sides of his horse, which ejected clouds from his nostrils, and was spotted with white foam, showed that he had ridden far and fast. Antinahuel looked at him for an instant.

"My son, Theg-teg—the thunderer has made a rapid journey."

"I have executed the orders of my father."

At these words, out of politeness, the Apo-Ulmen pressed the sides of his horse to retire.

"Black Stag may remain," he said; "is he not my friend?"

"I will remain if my father wishes it," the chief answered quietly.

"Let him remain, then; his brother has no secrets from him. My brother can speak."

"The Chiaplos are fighting," the latter replied; "they have dug up the hatchet, and turned it against their own breasts."

"Oh!" the toqui exclaimed, "my brother must be mistaken, the pale-faces are not cougouars, to devour each other."

And he turned towards Black Stag with a smile of undefinable expression.

"Theg-teg is not mistaken," the Indian warrior replied, "his eyes have seen clearly: the stone tolderi, which the pale-faces call Valdivia, is at this moment a more ardent furnace than the volcano of Autaco."

"Good!" the toqui remarked, "my son as seen well; he is a warrior brave in battle, but he is likewise prudent; did he stand apart to rejoice?"

"Theg-teg is prudent, but when he looks he means to see; he knows all, my father may question him."

"Good! the great warrior of the pale-faces set out from here to the help of his soldiers; the advantage is with him."

The Indian smiled, but made no reply.

"Let my brother speak!" Antinahuel resumed.

"He whom my brother names as the great warrior of the pale-faces is a prisoner; his soldiers are dispersed like grains of wheat."

"Wah!" Antinahuel cried with feigned anger, "my brother has a lying tongue. The great warrior has an arm strong as the thunder of Pillian. Nothing can resist it."

"That arm, however powerful, has not been able to save him; the eagle is captive."

"But his soldiers? he had a numerous army."

"I have told my father; the chief being made captive, the soldiers, fell beneath the blows of their angry enemies."

"The chiefs who were conquerors pursued them."

"What for? The pale-faces are women without courage; as soon as their enemies weep and pray for pardon they forgive them."

"Brothers ought not to be inexorable," said the toqui, "when they lift the hatchet against each other, they may wound a friend without wishing it."

The Indian bowed as if assenting.

"What are the pale-faces doing now?"

"They are assembled round the council fire."

"Good! They are wise men. I am satisfied with my son," Antinahuel added; "he is a warrior, as skilful as brave; he may retire."

"Theg-teg is not fatigued; his life is my father's," the warrior said, with a bow.

"Antinahuel will remember his son," the toqui said with a sign of dismissal.

The Indian bowed respectfully to his chief, and pressing his knees while shortening the bridle, he made his horse perform a curvet, brought it to the ground with an extraordinary bound, and went off caracoling.

"What does my brother think of that which this man has said?" he asked.

"My father is the wisest of the toquis of his nation, the chief the most venerated by the Araucanian tribes," Black Stag replied.

"My brother is right," the toqui said, with a haughty glance; "I have my nymph!"

The Apo-Ulmen bowed with an air of conviction. At this moment the Araucanian drums and trumpets sounded loudly—the chasquis were calling the chiefs to council.

“What will my father do?” asked the Apo-Ulmen.

“Man is weak,” Antinahuel replied; “but Pillian loves his sons, the Moluchos, he will inspire the words I shall pronounce.”

“My father has convoked the great Auca-coyog of the nation; did he suspect the news he has just received?”

“Antinahuel knows everything,” he answered.

“Good! I know what my father thinks.”

“Perhaps.”

“Let my father remember the words I have spoken.”

“My ears are open, my son may repeat them.”

“When cougouars tear each other to pieces, they prepare a rich quarry for the eagles of the Andes.”

“Good!” said Antinahuel, with a laugh; “my son is a great chief.”

The two warriors exchanged a look of undefinable meaning; these two men, so cunning and dissimulating, had compromised themselves to each other without avowing anything.

CHAPTER XL.

THE COUNCIL.

ANTINAHUEL had eagerly seized the pretext of the renewal of the treaties to try and obtain from the chiefs authority to carry into execution the projects which had been so long ripening in his brain. The Araucanian code, which contains all the laws of the nation, created an obligation for his doing so, from which even his renown and popularity were powerless to release him. But he hoped to overcome the opposition of the chiefs, or their repugnance to submit to his will, by means of his eloquence and the influence which, under many circumstances, he had exercised over the minds of the Ulmens, even those most determined to resist him.

The Araucanos cultivate with success the art of speaking, which among them leads to public honours. They make it a point to speak their own language well, and to preserve its purity by guarding particularly against the introduction of foreign words. They carry this so far, that when a white establishes himself amongst them, they oblige him to abandon his own name and take one of their country. The style of their speeches is figurative and allegorical.

This will suffice to show that the Araucanos are not so savage as we have been led to suppose. In short, a small people, who, without allies, isolated at the extremity of the continent, have, since the landing of the Spaniards on their coasts, that is to say, during three hundred years, constantly and alone resisted European armies composed of experienced soldiers and greedy adventurers, whom no difficulty was likely to stop, and who have preserved their independence and their nationality intact, are, in our opinion, respectable in every point of view, and ought not to be stigmatized as barbarians with impunity.

Antinahuel and Black-Stag arrived at the place where the chiefs were assembled. They dismounted and joined the groups of Ulmens. The chiefs, who were peacefully chatting together, at their arrival became silent, and, for a few minutes, not a word was heard in the assembly. At length Cathicara, the toqui of the Pire-Mapus, made a few steps towards the centre of the circle, and took the initiative.

Caticara was an old man of seventy, of majestic bearing, and imposing counte-

nance. A renowned warrior in his youth, now that many winters had wrinkled his brow and silvered his long hair, he enjoyed, by just title, a great reputation for wisdom in his nation.

"Toquis, Apo-Ulmens and Ulmens of the valiant nation of the Aucas, whose immense hunting-grounds cover the surface of the earth," he said, "my heart is sad; a cloud covers my mind, and my eyes, filled with tears, are constantly cast upon the ground; whence comes it that grief devours me? Why does the joyous song of the goldfinch no longer sound cheerfully in my ears? why do the rays of the sun seem less warm to me? why, in short, does nature appear less beautiful to me? Will you tell me, my brothers? You are silent; shame covers your brows; your humbled eyes are cast down—have you nothing to reply? It is because you are a degenerate people! your warriors are women, who instead of the lance take up the spindle; because you bow basely beneath the yoke of these Chiaplos, these Huincas, who laugh at you, for they know that you have no longer blood red enough to contend with them!"

The chiefs experienced a sensation of terror while looking at the toqui. A solemn silence prevailed in the assembly. On his part, Antinahuel did not stir. Black-Stag approached him softly, and asked—

"What does my father see?"

"I see the warriors of the pale-faces; they have dug up the war-hatchet, and are fighting with one another."

"What more does my father see?" Black-Stag resumed.

"I see streams of blood, which redden the soil; the odour of that blood rejoices my heart."

"What do they say?" the chiefs exclaimed. "What do the Aucas warriors say?"

"They say, 'Brothers, the hour is come! To arms!'"

"To arms!" the chiefs shouted, as with one voice.

"Chiefs of the Aucas," he said, "what do you order me to do?"

"Antinahuel," Cathicara replied, throwing his stone hatchet into the fire, "there is now but one supreme hatchet in the nation, it is in your hands; let it be red up to the hilt in the blood of the vile Huincas; lead our Utal-Mapus to battle—you have the supreme command! we give you the power of life and death over our persons."

Antinahuel raised his lofty head, his brow radiant with pride: brandishing in his nervous hand his powerful war-hatchet, he said haughtily—

"Aucas, I accept the honour you do me; I will prove worthy of the confidence. This hatchet shall never be buried till my body has served for food to the vultures of the Andes, or till the cowardly pale-faces shall have come upon their knees to implore pardon!"

"My father," said Black-Stag, "is a great chief; nothing is impossible to him!"

"What does my son mean?"

"War is declared. Whilst we attempt incursions into the Chilian territory, to keep our enemies in a state of uncertainty as to our plans, let my father mount with his mosotones upon his coursers more fleet than the wind, and fly upon the wings of the tempest to the Puelches."

"My son is wise! I will follow his counsels," the toqui answered, with a smile of mysterious expression; "but he has said war is resolved upon; the interests of my nation must not suffer from my short absence."

"My father will provide for that."

"I have provided for it; let my son listen to me."

"My ears are open to receive the words of my father."

"At sunrise, when the fumes of the water-fire are dissipated, the chiefs will ask for Antinahuel."

Black-Stag nodded assent.

"I will place in the hands of my son," the chief continued, "the stone hatchet, the sign of my dignity."

The Apo-Ulmen bowed respectfully.

"They are the most powerful Ulmens of the nation. Let my son remember they are eight in number; each of them must make an incursion on the frontier, in order to prove to the Chiaplos that hostilities have commenced."

"Good!"

"These are the names of the Ulmens: Tangol, Qudpal, Auchanguer, Colfunquin, Trumau, Cuyumil, and Pailapan. Does my son hear these names distinctly?"

"I have heard them."

"Good!" Antinahuel replied; "my son loves me; after two suns he will find me at the tolderia of the Black Serpents."

Antinahuel, at a bound, sprang upon a magnificent horse, held by the bridle by two Indians.

"Forward!" he cried, settling himself in his saddle, and plunging his spurs into the sides of the horse.

"We have arrived," the guide exclaimed.

"At last!" Antinahuel said.

"In which tolo is she?" asked Antinahuel.

"That is it," he said, stretching out his arm in the direction of the cabin.

The toqui turned round to ascertain whether his mosetones, whom, in his rapid course, he had left far behind, were rejoining him; and then, after the hesitation of a second, he approached the door and pushed it, saying in a low but determined voice—

"And he must be put to this!"

The door opened, and he entered.

CHAPTER XLI.

TWO HATREDS.

ANTINAHUEL found himself face to face with Dona Maria; by an instinctive movement each drew back a step, stifling a cry—a cry of stupor on the part of Antinahuel, of surprise on the part of Linda.

"Oh!" sighed Dona Rosario. "Oh, heaven! now I am really lost indeed!"

Dona Maria had in a few seconds driven back to her heart the feelings which raged within her.

"My brother is welcome," she said; "to what happy chance do I owe this presence?"

"A happy chance for me, particularly," he replied, with a satirical smile.

The toqui was too well acquainted with the companion of his childhood not to know that he had in her a formidable adversary.

"Well!" the Linda resumed, "will my brother deign to do me the pleasure of explaining the cause of his sudden appearance?"

"Oh! the cause is very simple indeed, not worth mentioning; I did not hope, in any way, to meet my sister here; I must confess I did not seek her."

"Ah!" said Dona Maria, "I am doubly fortunate."

"It is the truth," the chief said.

"I am all ears, my brother can speak."

"As my sister knows, this village is on the route which leads to my *tolderia*; the night is advanced, my *mosotones* require a few hours' rest; I resolved to encamp here."

"Not bad for an Indian," murmured Dona Maria; "well, we will say no more about that."

"Eh!" said Antinahuel, feigning for the first time to perceive Dona Rosario; "who is this charming young woman?"

"A slave, not worthy your notice," the Linda replied sternly.

"A slave!" Antinahuel cried.

"Yes, a slave." The Linda clapped her hands.

"Take away this woman!" she said.

"Oh, madam!" Rosario exclaimed, falling on her knees, "can you be inexorable towards a poor girl?"

The Linda gave her a fiery glance, and repulsed her with her foot.

"I ordered the girl to be taken away," she said, imperiously.

At this flagrant insult, the blood rushed to the heart of the poor girl; her pallid brow flushed with scarlet, and drawing herself up majestically and proudly, she said in a piercing voice, the prophetic tone of which struck the Linda to the heart—

"Beware, madam! God will punish you! As you to-day are without pity for me, so the day will come when there will be no pity for you!"

When Antinahuel and the Linda were left alone a long silence ensued. The last words of Rosario had wounded the Linda like the stroke of a poniard. Passing her hand across her brow, as if to drive away the importunate idea that pursued her, she turned towards Antinahuel.

"No diplomacy between us, brother," she said, "we know each other too well to lose time in manœuvring."

"My sister is right; let us speak frankly."

"The story of your return is very clever."

"Then my sister knows the reason that brings me."

"I do not know," she said, with an arch smile, which played like a sunbeam round her rosy lips.

"A chief explains himself clearly, no one imposes upon him. My sister knows my hatred for the chief of the pale-faces."

"Yes, I know that man is the personal enemy of my brother."

"Well, then, my sister has in her hands the blue-eyed maiden, and she will give her to me."

"My brother is a man, he does not know how to avenge himself: why should I give my prisoner up to him? woman alone possesses the secret of torturing those they hate."

Antinahuel, although his face remained impassive, shuddered inwardly to these odious words.

"My sister is boastful," he replied, "her skin is white, her heart knows not how to hate."

"No," she passionately exclaimed, "I have fixed the fate of this woman: I will not give her to my brother."

"Will my sister then forget her promise?"

"Of what promise do you speak, chief?"

Antinahuel appeared to hesitate for a moment.

"Will not my brother answer?" the Linda continued.

"He whom my sister calls General Bustamente," he replied in a sharp tone, "is a prisoner."

The Linda sprang up like a wounded lioness.

"A prisoner!" she cried.

"He is a prisoner, and within three days will be dead."

The Linda was struck with stupor; this frightful news crushed all her hopes.

"Oh!" she murmured at length, "he shall not die!"

"He will die!" replied the chief; "who can save him?"

"You," she said, emphatically grasping his arm.

"Why should I do it?" he remarked carelessly; "of what consequence is the life of the man to me?"

"No; but his life is precious to me. He alone can deliver up my enemy to me. He shall live!"

"Good! my sister will deliver him then, as she is so anxious to save him."

"You alone could do it, chief, if you would."

Antinahuel fixed his eyes upon her.

"What makes you suppose I would?" he said.

"Listen to me, chief!" the Linda cried. "You love that woman—that puny, pale-faced thing, do you not?"

The Indian started, but made no reply.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE RETURN TO VALDIVIA.

NIGHT was come; bending over the pillow of his friend, who was still buried in that sleep which generally follows great loss of blood, Valentine watched with anxious tenderness the changes which darkened his pale countenance.

"Oh!" said he, in a suppressed voice, "be thy assassins who they may, they shall pay dearly."

"Misfortune incessantly watches over man," the chief remarked.

"Speak then!" the young man asked, in a firm voice.

"My brother is strong, he is a great warrior, he will not suffer himself to be cast down. Let my brother hasten; we must be gone!"

"Be gone!" cried Valentine; "and my friend?"

"Our brother Louis will accompany us."

"Is it possible to move him?"

"It must be," the Indian said peremptorily; "the war-hatchet is dug up against the pale-faces."

"Let us depart then," the young man replied sorrowfully, convinced that Trangoil-Lanec knew more than he was willing to tell.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"To Valdivia," the chief replied; "it is there alone that Don Louis will be able to recover in safety."

"You are right," said Valentine; "but shall we remain inactive?"

"I will do what my brother the pale-face wishes!"

"Thank you, chief," the Frenchman replied.

"My brother saved my life," said the Umen earnestly; "that life is no longer mine, it belongs to him."

"Is my brother acquainted with the city?" Trangoil-Lanec asked.

"Why do you ask that question?"

"For a very simple reason. In the desert, by night or by day, I can serve as a guide to my brother; but here, in this tolderia of the whites, my eyes close."

"The devil!" said Valentine, "in that sense I am as blind as you, chief; it was only yesterday that I entered the city for the first time."

"Don't let that disturb you, senor," said one of the peons, "only tell me where you want to go, and I will conduct you."

"Hum!" Valentine replied; "where I want to go to? Caspeta! I cannot exactly say."

"Pardon me, senor," the arriero replied, "if I dare——"

"Oh, dare! dare! there's a good fellow! your idea is probably excellent."

"Why, senor, should you not go to the residence of Don Tadeo de Leon, my master?"

"Pardieu!" cried Valentine. "On my word, you are something like a guide!"

"Don Tadeo is most likely at the cabildo."

"By Jove! that is true again; but which is the way to the cabildo?"

"I will show you, senor."

"That's well! this is an intelligent lad. Let us be moving, my friend."

"Forward, then!" cried the arriero.

A soldier was marching with slow steps in front of the cabildo.

"Who goes there?" he shouted sharply.

"*La Patria!*" Valentine replied.

"Go on then!" said the soldier.

"Hum!" the young man murmured; "it appears not to be such an easy matter to obtain entrance; never mind," he added, "let us try. My friend," he said, "we have business in the palace."

"Have you the pass-word?"

"Santiago! no," Valentine answered frankly.

"Then you cannot enter."

"I am determined I will go in!" Valentine replied.

"To arms!" the soldier cried, and fired.

Valentine, who had watched attentively all the soldier's movements, had slipped quickly from his horse, and the bullet whistled over his head. At the cry of the soldier and the report, several armed soldiers, followed by an officer with a lighted lantern in his hand, rushed out of the palace.

"What is going on here?" the officer asked.

"Ah!" Valentine cried, to whom the voice was not unknown, "is that you, Don Gregorio?"

"Who calls me?" said the latter.

"I, Valentine!"

"What! is it you, my friend, who are making all this disturbance?" replied Don Gregorio advancing.

"What the devil was I to do?" said the young man; "I had not the pass-word, and I wanted to get in."

"Hum! none but a Frenchman would have such an idea as that."

"Is it not original?"

"Yes, but you risked being killed."

"Bah! we are always risking being killed; I recommend my plan to you, under similar circumstances."

"Thank you; but come in! come in!"

"That is all I want, particularly as I must see Don Tadeo instantly."

"I believe he is asleep."

"He must be awakened."

"Do you bring interesting news then?"

"Yes," Valentine replied; "terrible news!"

The arrieros bore the hammock, with Don Louis still asleep, into the cabildo.

"What does all this mean?" Don Gregorio said in astonishment; "is Don Louis wounded?"

"Yes," Valentine replied, in a husky voice; "he has received two dagger wounds."

"But how did it all happen?"

"You will soon learn; but pray conduct me instantly to Don Tadeo."

"In heaven's name, come, then! your reserve alarms me."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FATHER REVEALS HIMSELF.

DON TADEO had passed the greater part of the night in giving orders for the clearing away of the hideous traces left by the combat. He had named the magistrates charged with the police of the city. After having assured, as far as possible, the tranquillity and safety of the citizens, worn out with fatigue, sinking with sleep, he had thrown himself, clothed as he was, upon a camp bed. He had slept scarcely an hour, when the door of the chamber was pushed violently open, and a strong light gleamed in his eyes. Don Tadeo awoke suddenly.

"Who is there?" he cried.

"It is I," replied Don Gregorio.

"Well, but you do not seem to be alone."

"No, Don Valentine accompanies me."

"Don Valentine!" cried Don Tadeo, starting up; "why, I did not expect Don Valentine before morning; what reason can have induced him to travel by night?"

"A powerful reason, Don Tadeo," the young man remarked, in a melancholy voice.

"In Heaven's name, speak, then!" cried Don Tadeo.

"Be a man! be firm! collect all your courage!"

"Speak!" he said, "I am ready to hear you."

While uttering these words his voice was firm, his features calm.

"Is the misfortune you are about to announce to me personal?" said Don Tadeo.

"Yes," the young man replied, in a tremulous voice.

"God be praised! Go on, then; I listen to you."

"Dona Rosario has disappeared," he said: "she has been carried off during our absence; Louis, my foster-brother, in endeavouring to defend her, has fallen, pierced by two sword-thrusts."

The King of Darkness appeared a statue of marble; no emotion was perceptible upon his austere countenance.

"Is Don Louis dead?" he asked, earnestly.

"No," Valentine answered, more and more astonished; "I even hope that in a few days he will be cured."

"So much the better," said Don Tadeo, feelingly.

And crossing his arms upon his broad chest he resumed his hasty walk about the room. The three men looked at each other.

"Will you then abandon Dona Rosario to her ravishers?" Don Gregorio asked.

Don Tadeo darted at him a look charged with such bitter irony that Don Gregorio quailed beneath it.

"Were the ravishers concealed in the entrails of the earth, I would discover them, be they who they may."

"A man is on their track," said Trangoil-Lanec, advancing; "that man is Curumilla."

A flash of joy for a moment shot from the eye of the King of Darkness.

"Oh!" he murmured, with clenched teeth, "beware, Dona Maria, beware."

"What do you intend to do?" said Don Gregorio.

"Nothing, till the return of our scout," he replied; and then turning towards Valentine, "Well, my friend, have you nothing else to announce to me?"

"What leads you to suppose I have not told you all?" said the young man.

"Ah!" Don Tadeo replied, with a melancholy smile, "we Spanish-Americans are horribly superstitious."

"Well?"

"Well, then, among other follies of the same kind, we put faith in proverbs, and is there not one which somewhere says that a misfortune never comes singly?"

"Yesterday, as you know, General Bustamente renewed the treaties of peace with the Araucano chiefs."

"He did."

"I cannot tell what fugitive or what scout gave them information of what took place here; but they have learnt the defeat and capture of the general."

"I can understand that; go on."

"A kind of furious madness immediately seemed to possess them, and they held a great war-council."

"In which, I suppose, they decided upon breaking the treaties; is not that it?"

"Exactly,"

"And most likely determined upon war with us?"

"I suppose so; the four toquis cast the hatchet into the fire, and elected a chief."

"Ah, ah!" said Don Tadeo, "and do you know the name of this man?"

"Yes, Antinaheul."

CHAPTER XLIV.

CURUMILLA.

CURUMILLA, after having carefully studied the prints made by the ravishers, at once divined the route they had taken. He did not amuse himself by following them, for that would have been losing precious time; on the contrary, he resolved to cut across country, and wait for them at an elbow of the road he was acquainted with.

A sudden idea rushed like lightning through Curumilla's brain; gathering himself up, he stiffened up the iron muscles of his legs, and, bounding like a tiger, leaped up behind the horseman. Before the latter, surprised by this unexpected attack, had time to utter a cry, he pressed his throat in such a manner as, for the time, to render him incapable of calling for help. In the twinkling of an eye the horseman was gagged and thrown to the ground; then, securing the horse, Curumilla fastened it to a bush, and returned to his prisoner.

"Oh!" said Curumilla, who, upon leaning over him, recognised him, "is it you, Joan?"

"Curumilla!" the other replied.

"Where is my brother going?"

"To the *tolderia* of San Miguel."

"Good, and for what purpose?"

"To place in the hands of the sister of the grand *toqui* a woman whom we have carried off this morning."

"Who ordered you to do so?"

"She whom we are going to meet."

"Where does this woman expect the prisoner?"

"I have told the chief—at the *tolderia* of San Miguel."

"In which *casa*?"

"In the last; the one which stands a little apart."

"That is well. Let my brother exchange poncho and hat with me."

The Indian obeyed.

At a sign from Curumilla he bent down in the high grass, and disappeared in the direction of Valdivia. The chief, without losing an instant, jumped into the saddle and soon joined the little troop, who had continued jogging quietly along, without dreaming of the substitution. It was Curumilla who, while carrying the young girl into the house, had whispered hope and courage.

After the unexpected arrival of Antinahuel, when, at the order of Dona Maria, Curumilla led away the prisoner, instead of reconducting her to the apartment in which she had been, he threw a poncho over her.

"Follow me," he said in a low voice.

The maiden hesitated; she was fearful of a snare.

"I am Curumilla, one of the *Ulmens* devoted to the two Frenchmen, the friends of Don Tadeo."

Rosario started imperceptibly.

"Go on," she replied; "I will follow you."

"Does my sister find herself strong enough to mount on horseback?"

"To escape from my persecutors," she replied, "I have strength to do anything."

"Good!" said Curumilla, "my sister is courageous. To horse, then."

The maiden breathed a sigh of relief on feeling herself one more free, and under the protection of a devoted friend.

[We must leave our friends in this critical position for the present; but those readers who feel an interest in the loves of Don Louis and Dona Rosario, will find their curiosity fully satisfied in the following volume of this series, called "*The Pearl of the Andes*."]]

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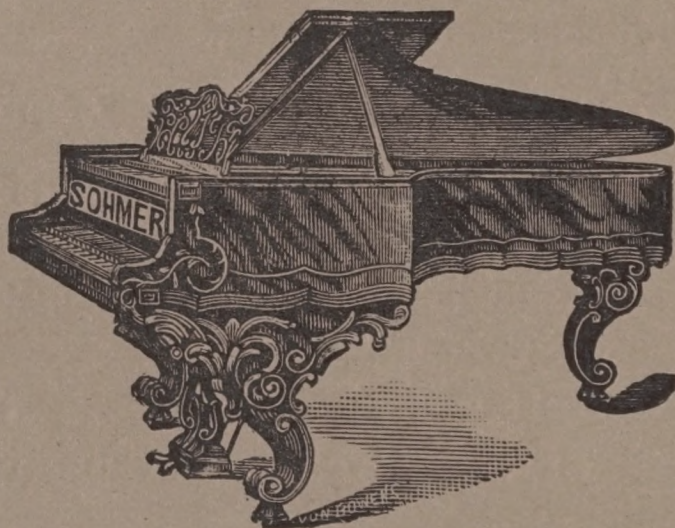
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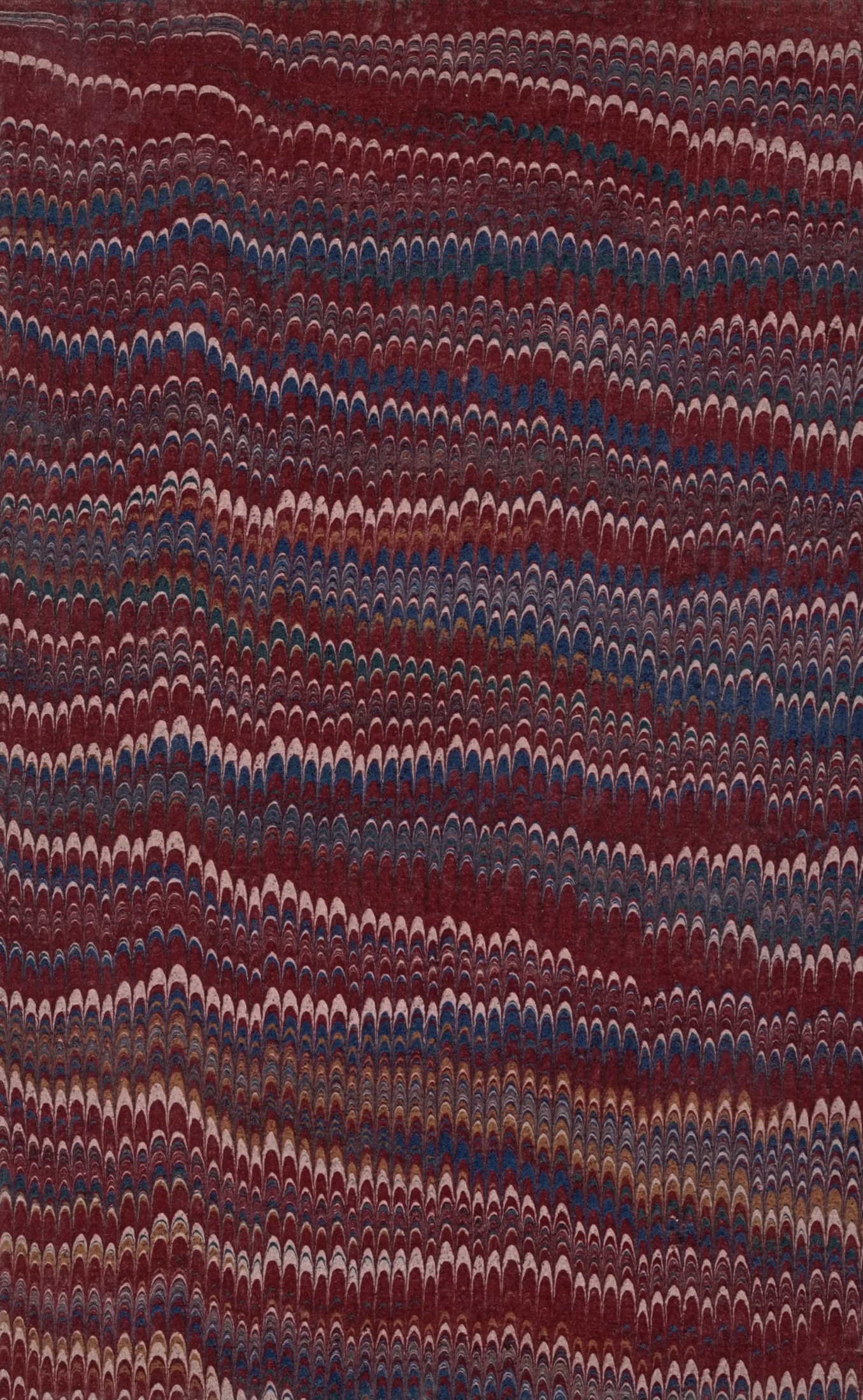
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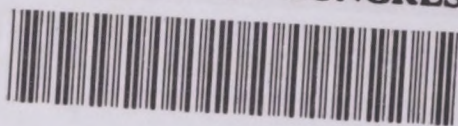
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